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The Aesthetics of Madame de Staël and Mary Shelley

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Résumé

L'esthétique de Madame de Staël and Mary Shelley discute l'art de l'improvisation et le concept de l'enthousiasme dans les écrits de ces deux auteurs. Dans ce projet, j'explore l'esthétique d'improvisation et d'enthousiasme de Madame de Staël dans Corinne, en me référant à son autre roman Delphine, à sa pièce de théâtre Sapho, et à ses nouvelles ainsi qu'à ses textes philosophiques comme De l'Allemagne, De l'influence des passions, et De la littérature. J'argumente que Madame de Staël représente à travers le caractère de Corinne une esthétique anti-utilitaire. J'explique qu'elle évoque des valeurs cosmopolites qui valorisent une culture indigène qui est en opposition avec l'impérialisme de Napoléon. De plus, j'examine comment les improvisations de Corinne dérivent d'un enthousiasme qui est associé à la définition que Platon offre du terme. Ceci est évident par la signification que Madame de Staël présente du terme dans De L'Allemagne. J'interprète la maladie de Corinne comme étant d'origine psychosomatique qui est manifesté par la perte de son génie et par un suicide lent qui est une expression de colère contre la patriarchie. Le caractère de Corinne permet à Madame de Staël d'explorer le conflit que les femmes artistes éprouvaient entre ayant une carrière artistique et adhérant à l'idéologie domestique.

Chapitre deux se concentre sur l'intérêt que Shelley démontre sur l'art de l'improvisation comme elle l'exprime dans ses lettres à propos de l'improvisateur Tommaso Sgricci. Malgré sa fascination avec la poésie extemporanée, Shelley regrette que cette forme d'art soit évanescente. Aussi, j'examine son enthousiasme pour un autre artiste, Nicolò Paganini. Son enchantement avec se violoniste virtuose est lié à des discours concernant le talent surnaturel des improvisateurs. J'argumente qu'il y a un continuum d'improvisation entre les balades orales du peuple et les improvisations de culture sophistiqué des improvisateurs de

haute société. J'estime que les Shelleys collaboraient à définir une théorie d'inspiration à travers leurs intérêts pour l'art de l'improvisation.

Chapitre trois considère le lien entre cosmologie et esthétique d'inspiration à travers la fonction de la musique, spécialement La Création de Joseph Haydn, dans The Last Man de Shelley. J'examine la représentation du sublime des Alpes dans le roman à travers de discours qui associent les Alpes avec les forces primordiales de la création. Les rôles de la Nécessité, Prophétie, et du Temps peuvent être compris en considérant la musique des sphères.

Chapitre quatre explore les différentes définitions de terme enthousiasme dans les écrits de Shelley, particulièrement Valperga et The Last Man. Je discute l'opinion de Shelley sur Madame de Staël comme suggéré dans Lives. J'analyse les caractères qui ressemblent à Corinne dans les écrits de Shelley. De plus, je considère les sens multiples du mot enthousiasme en relation avec la Guerre civil d'Angleterre et la Révolution française. Je présente comment le terme enthousiasme était lié au cours du dix-septième siècle avec des discours médicales concernant la mélancolie et comment ceci est reflété dans les caractères de Shelley.

Mots Clés

Improvisation, Enthousiasme, Inspiration, Esthétique, Sublime, Evanescence, Romantisme, Musique des Sphères, Cosmologie, Mélancolie.

Abstract

The Aesthetics of Madame de Staël and Mary Shelley discusses the art of improvisation and the concept of enthusiasm in the writings of these two authors. In this project, I explore Madame de Staël's aesthetics of improvisation and enthusiasm as represented in Corinne by drawing from her other novel Delphine, her play Sapho, and her short stories as well as her philosophical texts such as De l'Allemagne, De l'influence des passions, and De la littérature. I argue that Madame de Staël embraces through Corinne an anti-utilitarian aesthetic. I maintain that she represents a cosmopolitanism that values indigenous culture as opposed to Napoleon's Imperialism. Furthermore, I examine how Corinne's improvisations derive from an enthusiasm that can be associated to Plato's elucidation of the term in Phaedrus and in Ion. This is evident by Madame de Staël's own definition of enthusiasm as presented in the closing chapters of her De l'Allemagne. I interpret Corinne's illness that is manifested in the loss of her genius as having psychosomatic origins and as being a slow suicide that is an expression of anger against patriarchy. The character of Corinne allows Madame de Staël to explore the conflict that women artists faced between having an artistic career and adhering to the domestic ideology.

Chapter two focuses on the interest that Shelley takes in the art of improvisation as is manifested in her letters about the improvisator Tommaso Sgricci. Despite her fascination with extempore poetry, she regrets that this art form is evanescent. Moreover, I examine her enthusiastic response to another artist, Nicolò Paganini. Her fascination with this virtuoso violinist is linked to discourses about the unnatural talent of improvisatores. I argue there is a continuum of improvisation from the ballad form of the common people to the high-cultured

improvisatore. I hold that the Shelleys were collaborating in defining the theory of inspiration through their interest in the art of improvisation.

Chapter three considers the link between cosmology and aesthetics of inspiration through the function of music, especially Joseph Haydn's The Creation, in Shelley's The Last Man. I examine the representation of the sublimity of the Alps in the narrative through discourses that associate the Alps with the primordial forces of creation. The roles of Necessity, Prophecy, and Time can be understood in the novel by taking into account the notion of the music of the spheres.

Chapter four explores the different meanings of the word enthusiasm in Shelley's writings, primarily in Valperga and The Last Man. I discuss Shelley's views on Madame de Staël as presented in Lives. I analyze Corinne-inspired characters in Shelley's texts. In addition, I consider the meaning of enthusiasm in Shelley's writings in relation to the English Civil War and the French Revolution. I present how enthusiasm was linked in the seventeenth-century to medical discourses about melancholia and how this is reflected in Shelley's characters.

Key Words

Improvisation, Enthusiasm, Inspiration, Aesthetic, Sublime, Evanescence, Romanticism, Music of the Spheres, Cosmology, Melancholia.

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Abbreviations

Some of Mary Shelley's texts are abbreviated throughout the dissertation in the following manner:

LMWS	The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley.
Journals	The Journals of Mary Shelley: 1814-1844.
History	History of Six Weeks' Tour Through A Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland: With Letters Descriptive of A Sail Round the Lake of Geneva, and of the Glaciers of Chamouni.
Rambles	Rambles in Germany and Italy, in 1840, 1842, and 1843. By Mrs. Shelley in Two Volumes.
Perkin Warbeck	The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck: A Romance.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Aspasia Mouratidis.

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Introduction

On the 3rd of July 1827, Mary Shelley would write to Teresa Guiccioli concerning a letter by Lord Byron: "Do you recall that little English letter that he wrote at the end of your Corinne? Would you mind giving me a copy" (LMWS Bennett 554). That Lord Byron chose to write his love letter in his mistress's copy of Corinne suggests that he was one of the many early readers of this novel who ascribed a fair amount of accuracy on its descriptions. Similarly, Shelley asks specifically for this particular letter among other letters written by Lord Byron not because she wants to pry into the poet's love affairs but because Corinne is a novel that would have a great impact on the writings of many women writers of the Romantic era.

In this project, my primary aim is to trace and define the aesthetics of inspiration in Madame de Staël and Mary Shelley. In A Defence of Poetry, Percy Bysshe Shelley writes, "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." (Defence of Poetry 36). In Madame de Staël's Corinne, it is a woman poet, Corinne, who is the unacknowledged legislator through her art of improvisation. Madame de Staël chooses to make Corinne an Improvisatrice because high cultured poetic improvisation performed, for instance, by Corilla Olimpica and Tommaso Sgricci was a particularity of Italian literary culture that attracted tourists and was seen as foreign and fascinating among European travelers in Italy. Aesthetics cannot always be divided from the political, and if Madame de Staël chooses specifically to display the Italian art of improvisation, she does so with a political aim—she wants to promote Italian nationalism. In other words, she wants Italians to take pride in their literature, language and arts in order to stir nationalistic sentiments in Italians for Italy's independence and unification. Although the different regions of Italy were separated and national unification did not occur

until the Risorgimento, which is estimated to have happened either in 1861 or 1870, the concept of Italy had been present in intellectuals' thoughts (The Making of Italy 1 & 2). In other words, "national consciousness" for Italy had been present before the Romantic era in such poets as Dante and Petrarch and in Machiavelli's The Prince, in which there is the wish that "a liberator would appear to deliver Italians from foreign domination" (Mack The Making of Italy 2). Denis Mack explains that "foreign rule" had often been accepted among Italians because it avoided conflicts between the different regions of Italy (The Making of Italy 2). In fact, Mack maintains that the "existing governments" among the different regions of Italy were so disunited that the Italians perceived Napoleon's "invasion as a deliverance", which points out that Italians were, at the time, simply hoping for a "good government" rather than a "national" one (Mack The Making of Italy 5-6). In the early nineteenth century, Mack argues that many European regions began to "search for national identity" by attempting to learn about their "common heritage" and establishing their "national languages" (The Making of Italy 6). Alfieri's tragedies and Uglo Foscolo's poetry were important in promoting sentiments for a shared national tradition in Italy (Mack The Making of Italy 6). With her novel Corinne ou l'Italie, Madame de Staël participates in this Italian literary movement for the raising of Italy's national consciousness.

To clarify the notion of nationalism in relation to romanticism, it is useful to refer to Miroslav Hroch's definition of National Romanticism. In the Romantic era, there was a loss of a traditional understanding of the order of the world due to new scientific findings that led to the questioning of religious faith. Hroch points out that this phenomenon together with the abolition of long-established institutions led to a "crisis of identity" among Romantics (6). Hroch maintains that this "crisis of identity" inclined Romantics to "search" for "stability" (6

& 7). Hroch argues that Romanticism and national movements have "shared roots" (7). "Language", "idealization of the past", and the "cult of the common people" were features that were associated with "national movement", argues Hroch, just as they are linked with the Romantic search for stability ("National Romanticism" 11). In De l'Allemagne, Madame de Staël would also wish that Germans develop stronger national ties: "mais le patriotisme des nations doit être égoïste…cette antipathie pour les moeurs, les coutumes et les langues étrangères, qui fortifie dans tous les pays le lien national" (Vol.I, 56&57). In relation to this statement by Madame de Staël, Simone Balayé explains that what the author calls "cette sainte antipathie" indicates love of one's country and the necessity to protect it against foreign domination (« Madame de Staël et l'Europe napoléonienne » 27). Overall, it could thus be said that Madame de Staël's promotion of patriotism, apparent in both Corinne and De l'Allemagne, grew out of her opposition to Napoleon's French empire.

Madame de Staël's ideals about freedom stand in sharp contrast to Napoleon's wars and conquests in Italy and to his French empire. Napoleon's Code may have brought some positive reforms in France; however, crowning himself as emperor in 1804, after having been First Consul since 1800, turned his regime to a "dictatorship" (Matthews Revolution and Reaction 75). He may be viewed as a possible "enlightened despot"[1], but a despot nevertheless. With the publication of his Civil Code in 1804, he established a number of positive reforms that conformed to the ideals of the French Revolution: he introduced the "abolition of feudalism", "equality before the law", "careers open to talents", "freedom of conscience", "state-run lycées, or secondary schools" and "financial reforms." (Matthews Revolution and Reaction 82 & 84). When he conquered Italy, Napoleon also introduced these

[1] Matthews 90.

revolutionary reforms, which generally benefited Italian people. On the other hand, one of the negative things that Napoleon's regime brought to Italy was the imposition of high taxes to pay for his wars—this created a "strong opposition", which promoted the "growth of nationalism" (Mack The making of Italy 6). Furthermore, another of the negative aspects of Napoleon's power is that he was opposed to the "freedom of the press" (Matthews Revolution and Reaction 84). By 1810, there were only four newspapers remaining in Paris from the seventy-three that had circulated in 1800 (Matthews Revolution and Reaction 84). Napoleon censored all writings that he viewed as possibly threatening to his regime; as a consequence, Madame de Staël witnessed her De l'Allemagne destroyed by the emperor in 1810, as it was about to appear.

Madame de Staël, together with the group of Coppet, valued cosmopolitanism as opposed to the uniformity of Napoleon's French empire. In De l'esprit de conquête, Benjamin Constant, a close friend to Madame de Staël and a member of the Coppet group, writes, "Un gouvernement qui voudrait aujourd'hui pousser à la guerre et aux conquêtes un people européen commettrait donc un grossier anachronisme" (110). This "anachronism" is evident by Napoleon's adoption of a classical model for his empire, which, as Susan Tenenbaum argues, stripped Europe from its "past" and conformed it to "uniform law" ("The Coppet Circle and Europe" 367). In other words, Tenenbaum explains, "By adopting classicism as his official aesthetic doctrine, Napoleon denied the process of historical change to promote the sterile limitations of archaic models" ("The Coppet Circle and Europe" 364). By doing so, Tenenbaum maintains that Napoleon succeeded in "deracinating his subjects" in order to better subjugate them ("The Coppet Circle and Europe" 364). In "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose", Immanuel Kant suggests that the high cost of war with its

uncertainties becomes needless as there is a development of interdependence between states due to commerce. This interdependence between states creates a "political body", in which the "members" have "interest in maintaining the whole" (Kant "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" 67). Kant writes, "And this encourages the hope that, after many revolutions, with all their transforming effects, the highest purpose of nature, a universal cosmopolitan existence, will at last be realized as the matrix within which all the original capacities of the human race may develop" ("Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" 68). With his empire, Napoleon thwarts this historical change of peaceful negotiations and dialogues between states from happening. Tenenbaum says that for the Coppet circle, "an open system of historically evolving interdependent states was defined against a closed uniform system imposed by force of arms." ("The Coppet Circle and Europe" 368). Moreover, Tenembaum explains what Napoleon's views for his empire were: "On the international level the objective of the despotic state was the replication of its domestic system; conquered territories would be subject to a uniform centralized administration, an alien aesthetic, and an abstract legal code that masked the exercise of arbitrary rule." ("The Coppet Circle and Europe" 364-365). Thus, Napoleon wanted to establish uniformity across his empire by imposing his Legal Code. The trouble with implementing his Code in foreign territories was that it ignored local particularities. For instance, under Napoleon's control of Italy, "the new Italian legal codes were translated almost verbatim from the French, with little regard for Italian traditions" (The New Encyclopedia Britannica 226). Thus, the application of the Legal Code in French occupied regions was a manifestation of Napoleon's supremacy. Constant writes, « dans le système de conquêtes, cette manie d'uniformité réagit des vaincus sur les vainqueurs. Tous perdent leur caractère national, leurs couleurs primitives ; l'ensemble

n'est plus qu'une masse inerte qui par intervalles se réveille pour souffrir, mais qui d'ailleurs s'affaisse et s'engourdit sous le déspotisme. » (135). For Constant, uniformity results in a loss of national character. In contrast to the uniformity of Napoleon's empire, Tenenbaum indicates that the Coppet group admitted "national differentiation" as well as "commonality", or shared cultural and historical attributes between European nations ("The Coppet Circle and Europe" 365). Thus, Madame de Staël's cosmopolitanism is not to be understood as an erasure of nationalism, but rather it should be seen as a valorization of patriotism. In « Le Groupe de Coppet: conscience d'une mission commune », Balayé writes :

> On a beaucoup parlé du cosmopolitisme de Coppet. Il ne faut pas oublier que chacun de ses membres est enraciné dans un terroir (9). Ceci empêche leur cosmopolitisme de dériver vers une vague citoyenneté du monde, de substituer une couleur uniforme à la richesse des particularismes nationaux. Pour eux, les nationalités, mot inventé à Coppet (10), doivent s'enrichir mutuellement et non pas s'effacer. Il s'agit d'utiliser sans chauvinisme les richesses de chacun pour le progrès de tous (11). On voit se combiner ici le culte de l'universel à la manière du 18^{e} siècle et le culte de la différence, notion bien romantique. (32)

In other words, the ideology of the Coppet Group does not espouse the mere concept of 'citizens of the world', but instead it upholds strong ties to nationalism. In fact, Balayé argues that the Coppet Circle has a "cosmopolitisme salvateur des patries et des peuples" (« Le Groupe de Coppet: conscience d'une mission commune » 33). As Balayé points out, the Group of Coppet emphasizes nationalism and cultural diversity while valuing open channels of communication between nations. Thus, Madame de Staël's cosmopolitanism was a peaceful

dialogues between nations that she represented together with the group of intellectuals of different national backgrounds with whom she had conversations at Coppet.

The Coppet Group's vision was cooperation and dialogue between nations that translates into, as Balayé notes, pluralism[2] rather than homogeneity. Napoleon too valued French nationalism by expanding the borders of his nation state; however, his nationalism may have been, to use Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen's term, "extreme nationalism". Vertovec and Cohen maintain, "In situations of extreme nationalism or totalitarianism, such as those of the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy, cosmopolites were seen as treacherous enemies of the state." (6). It is this cosmopolitanism that Napoleon may have seen as threatening in Madame de Staël; as a consequence, he exiled her. As revealed by one of his letters, Napoleon strongly objects to Madame de Staël's opinions. He writes to Fouché :

> Un autre objet est Madame de Staël. Elle prétend que je lui ai permis de venir à Paris, et elle veut y rester. Qu'elle se rende à Coppet ; vous sentez que je ne suis pas assez imbécile pour la vouloir à Paris plutôt qu'à vingt lieues. Elle ne se mêle que des affaires de la France, à Génève, qui est le pays du monde qui est le plus nul pour ses efforts. Faites connaître à ses amis qu'elle s'arrêtera à quarante lieues. Tous les éléments de discorde, il faut les éloigner de Paris. Il n'est pas possible que, quand je serais à deux mille lieux, à l'extrémité de l'Europe, je laisse aux mauvais citoyens le champs libre d'agiter ma capitale. (646-647, Vol. V)

[2] Balayé more specifically says, "La pluralité des nations" (« Le Groupe de Coppet : conscience d'une mission commune » 32-33). She writes, « Ainsi le groupe de Coppet s'est-il forgé une conscience de la pluralité des nations, de l'originalité propre à chaque culture et de l'appui qu'elles doivent se donner pour progresser » (« Le Groupe de Coppet : conscience d'une mission commune » 32-33).

Napoleon was paying close attention to the manner that Madame de Staël was resisting his regime; as another of his letter reveals, he obviously saw her as an adversary to be cautious of: "Ne laissez pas approcher de Paris cette coquine de Madame de Staël. Je sais qu'elle n'en est pas éloignée" (1302, Vol 6). Thus, the Coppet circle invited communication between nations rather than the hierarchical system of power envisioned by Napoleon's empire. In fact, Madame de Staël describes Napoleon's ambition to power over Europe as "monarchie universelle" (Dix années d'exil 192). Madame de Staël writes:

> Mais Bonaparte, que pouvait-il dire ? Portait-il aux nations étrangères plus de liberté ? Aucun monarque de l'Europe ne se serait permis dans une année les arbitraires insolences qui signalent chacun de ses jours. Il venait seulement leur faire échanger leur tranquillité, leur indépendance, leur langue, leurs lois, leur fortune, leur sang, leurs enfants, contre le malheur et la honte d'être anéantis comme nation et méprisé comme hommes. Il commençait enfin cette entreprise de la monarchie universelle, le plus grand fléau dont l'espèce humaine puisse être menacée et la cause assurée de la guerre éternelle. (Dix années d'exil 192)

Not only did Napoleon want power over Europe, but he posed a threat to the national identity of the people he conquered. In Rambles, Shelley too sees Napoleon as imperiling national individuality. Shelley writes, "The French came next, and the tendency of their government was always to destroy the nationality of any people subdued by them" (Rambles 314). Kurt Kloocke explains what the name « Coppet » represents : « ce nom est plus qu'un simple toponyme désignant le demeure de Madame de Staël. Il est, au contraire, le nom qui résume une vision de ce que pourrait être une vision libre et pluriculturelle, respectueuse de l'identité nationale, culturelle, religieuse de tous les peuples qui ont le privilège de vivre dans cette

partie du monde. » (« Allocution du Secrétaire général » 11). Thus, Madame de de Staël along with the Coppet group has a vision of a cosmopolitan Europe that embraces national and cultural differences.

In this dissertation, I will focus primarily on the aesthetics of improvisation and enthusiasm in Madame de Staël's and Mary Shelley's writings. Drawing from the enormous scholarship that has been written both in French and English on Madame de Staël's aesthetics of improvisation and from my own observations on her writings, I describe Madame de Staël's views on the aesthetics of improvisation as represented in the character Corinne. In my analysis of improvisation and enthusiasm as represented in Madame de Staël and Mary Shelley, I am very much influenced by Angela Esterhammer's Romanticism and Improvisation 1750-1850, Jon Mee's Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation, Timothy Clark's The Theory of Inspiration, Angela Leighton's Shelley and the Sublime, and Marjorie Hope Nicholson's Mountain Gloom, Mountain Glory. In this dissertation, I will study Madame de Staël's aesthetics of improvisation and enthusiasm as presented in Corinne by examining her other fictional works such as Delphine, Sapho, and short stories as well as her philosophical texts such as De l'Allemagne, De l'influence des passions, and De la littérature. My project branches out of the important scholarly research of Esterhammer's Romanticism and Improvisation, 1750-1850 and Mee's Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation. For this reason, I will like to start by offering a brief summary of their work.

One of the main scholars who has done work on the art of improvisation is Esterhammer. In Romanticism and Improvisation, 1750-1850, Esterhammer puts forward three defining elements of poetic improvisation: the "immediate feedback" from the audience, the "forward movement of time", and "a giving theme and a limiting framework"

(Romanticism and Improvisation 4). Esterhammer also suggests that in the "Preface" of Lyrical Ballads Wordsworth's elucidation of the poet's creative undertaking as being an interdependent experience between "emotion" and "mechanical habit" echoes the aesthetics of improvisation despite the fact that ultimately he distances himself from the "conviviality" of improvisation by insisting on "emotion recollected in tranquility" and in solitary "communion with nature" in his definition of poetry (Romanticism and Improvisation 33 & 34). Thus, Esterhammer has found considerable support to claim that "poetic theory and practice" at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century was influenced to some extent by the "Mediterranean" art of improvisation (Romanticism and Improvisation 34).

In addition to defining the art of improvisation and its impact on Romantic poetics, Esterhammer presents the debate that existed in the Romantic era of whether the modern improviser could be linked to classical tradition and Homer. Travel narratives and observers' records about the art of improvisation gave rise to the popularity of the contemporary *improvisator*, which in turn generated the speculation that Homer had been an improviser who had lived in a culture that was predominantly oral and who, accordingly, altered his poetry with every presentation (Romanticism and Improvisation 59). *Improvisatori*, their supporters, and patrons were pleased with the parallels drawn by philologists between the ancient bard and the modern improviser because it gave a distinguished history to the genre of improvisation (Romanticism and Improvisation 66). Conversely, some critics argued that contemporary improvisers, unlike the "Homeric" poet, were a "disruptive force" and lacked "originality" by their over reliance on classical works (Romanticism and Improvisation 67).

Then, Esterhammer probes into the reception and destiny of both fictional and real-life *improvisatrices*, notably Corilla Olimpica and Madame de Staël's Corinne, as well as the

manner in which English poetesses such as Felicia Hemans and L.E.L. reflected on the genre of improvisation (Romanticism and Improvisation 78-103). Even though it may seem at first that espousing the persona of the *improvisatrice* would provide women writers with more emotional authenticity and poetic spontaneity, it rather reveals the tensions implicated for women poets who had to fit in a domestic role while pursuing an artistic vocation and inhabiting a public space (Romanticism and Improvisation 93).

After discussing the fate of the Romantic *improvisatrice*, Esterhammer argues that during the post-Waterloo years there were mixed reports about *improvisators* who were regarded by some as being crafty and dishonest and were treated with scorn and by others as being exceptionally gifted and deserving praise and raving admiration (Romanticism and Improvisation 116). The ability that the improviser had to re-create himself in each of his performances uncovered disagreeable suggestions about the lack of stability and predictability of human identity (Romanticism and Improvisation 119). Esterhammer outlines both Percy Shelley's and Lord Byron's reaction towards the famous *improvisator* Tommaso Sgricci and the way that they experimented with the aesthetics of improvisation in their writings (Romanticism and Improvisation 119-125). Given the fact that the changing economic dynamics of the Romantic period were such that works that were once considered as high literary achievements were now becoming mere commodities, writers, who were becoming dependent on the marketplace for their survival, felt an uneasiness towards extempore poets, whom they perceived as shallow and manipulative literary types, and sought to dissociate themselves from the debasement of literature that was oriented towards profit-making (Romanticism and Improvisation 176) . Thus, in novels of the Romantic period as well as in non-fictional descriptions, the improviser was often represented as a "social misfit" and as a

marginal figure unsettling a social system that insisted on fixed professional and individual identities and on regulated financial systems (Romanticism and Improvisaton 177). Esterhammer explains that nineteenth-century observers remarked that the execution of the "unnatural" talent that the improviser possessed required exceptional effort, which caused physical and neurological strain upon the improviser who became fatigued, debilitated, and made sick by the endeavor (Romanticism and Improvisation 207). Although the improviser was often depicted as "transgressive" at the beginning of the nineteenth century, by mid-century, he became even more "marginalized" by being described as a "madman" or a "mystic" (Romanticism and Improvisation 206).

In addition to Esterhammer, Mee's Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period is important research for my own project. Mee argues that just as terms such as "imagination", "vision", "prophecy" and "affect" are considered important for Romanticism, to this list should be added "enthusiasm" "as a new category of serious analysis for the writing of the Romantic period (1 & 2). Mee states that the study of enthusiasm is promising because it has not "been fully recuperated by the ideology of the aesthetic" (2). He writes that his book aims to trace the different senses of the word enthusiasm that emerge from dialogues in diverse contexts (1). He explains that in the Romantic period the aesthetic sphere admitted enthusiasm, but it sought to regulate it and to dissociate it from religious enthusiasm (3). Given the stress on emotion in the Romantic period, most scholars assume that the term enthusiasm had lost its negative connotations by the early nineteenth-century; however, Mee maintains that there are "striking and important *continuities* in the attitudes expressed towards enthusiasm" that are still present in the Romantic period and that affect dominant discourses (4). He explains that even though in the

eighteenth-century the term enthusiasm was generally perceived positively, this change of attitude occurred gradually from mid seventeenth century to mid nineteenth century, but there was never a "complete rupture" with its past history (Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation 23). Individuals who claimed to prophecy events about the State were regarded with great mistrust because they were linked with the enthusiasm of the religious sects and prophets during the English Civil War that had threatened the integrity of Church and civil society (Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation 9 & 26-27). One of the reasons that enthusiasm was disliked was that it was related with the declarations of religious sects that divine inspiration could suddenly befall the individual or the congregation so that hierarchical authority was unnecessary (Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation 9-10). If enthusiasm was accepted as part of poetic inspiration within the aesthetic sphere, it was also suspected for its potential confusion with religious enthusiasm (Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation 17). The aesthetic sphere could admit emotion but only if it was "regulated" (Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation 17). There was a fear that the intensity of ferocity that was manifested during the English Civil War will be repeated if religious enthusiasm was left unrestrained (Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation 24). In order to discredit claims of spiritual inspiration, enthusiasm was attached by such writers as Henry More in Enthusiasmus Triumphatus to medical discourses, in which divine revelation was interpreted to be the "product of diseased minds" (Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation 28-28). As a result, enthusiasm was seen as a type of "madness" during the seventeenth century. Disquisitions about enthusiasm included the "fear of contagion" that threatened to spread among the susceptible "masses" and the "irrational mob" (Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation 30-

31). There was an "anxiety" that the attempt of regulating enthusiasm will actually strengthen it instead of restraining it (Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation 47).

Some of the questions that I attempt to answer in this dissertation are:
What is the relationship between Staël and Shelley in terms of improvisation and enthusiasm? What is the influence of Madame de Staël's Corinne on Shelley? What are Madame de Staël's aesthetics of improvisation as presented in Corinne? How does Shelley view improvisation? How do the aesthetics of improvisation and enthusiasm relate to political discourses and gender relations?

What I have observed in my scholarly research on Madame de Staël is that there is an extensive scholarship both from the French side and the English side, but they do not enter much in dialogue with each other. In contrast, I engage with the literary criticism of both the French and English critics. I explore Madame de Staël's influence on Shelley by looking at Corinne in relation to Shelley's less studied texts such as Valperga, The Last Man, and her short biography of Madame de Staël in Lives. Through my analysis of Shelley's aesthetics of inspiration, I have come to the conclusion that discourses of poetic enthusiasm and religious enthusiasm often converge. Shelley may be critical of claims to divine revelation by such individuals as Johanna Southcott, for instance, but, at the same time, draws from the tradition of religious enthusiasm in the depiction of Beatrice in Valperga and the false-prophet in The Last Man. Overall, my aim is to show that Shelley too was an active participator in the theory of inspiration as much as her fellow male Romantic poets.

I interpret Madame de Staël and Shelley's texts by situating them in their historical contexts, by analyzing them, and by doing a close reading between texts with the aim to point out the discourses that were happening about improvisation and enthusiasm in order to trace

out their aesthetics of inspiration. Given the fact that Shelley was an avid reader, I, however, also examine the rich layers of intertextuality in Shelley's texts that highlight her allusions to other literary texts written both prior and during the Romantic era. Moreover, some literary criticism dissociates Shelley from the aesthetics of the Romantic poets. One such notable example is Anne K. Mellor's "Why Women Didn't Like Romanticism?", in which Mellor writes that Shelley disliked Romanticism because she perceived a "profound egotism" in the male Romantics' emphasis on the "divine" nature of the "human imagination" (284). Mellor further writes that "Frankenstein is a direct attack on the Romantic celebration of the creative process" ("Why Women Didn't like Romanticism?" 281). She states that it useful to view men's Romanticism, as being different from women's ("Why Women Didn't like Romanticism?" 285). Mellor writes:

> The male writers promoted an ideology that celebrated revolutionary change, the divinity of the poetic creative process, the development of the man of feeling, and the 'acquisition of the philosophic mind.' In opposition, the female writers heralded an equally revolutionary ideology, what Mary Wollstonecraft called 'a REVOLUTION in female manners.' This feminist ideology celebrated the education of the rational woman and an ethic of care that required one to take full responsibility for the predictable consequences of one's thoughts and actions, for all the children of one's mind and body. ("Why Women Didn't Like Romanticism?" 285).

I agree with Mellor that Shelley promoted "the education of the rational woman" and an "ethic of care". This is especially true in my discussion of Euthanasia, whose personal and political actions are guided by a care for the people in Valperga. There is also a strong emphasis to the

fact that Euthanasia uses reason as her guide despite the fact that her character is marked by enthusiasm. Shelley contrasts Euthanasia's rational decisions to Beatrice, whose fall is caused by a lack of temperance in her enthusiasm. However, my position differs from Mellor's because my argument is that Shelley participated together with the male Romantics in the theory of inspiration. Therefore, my viewpoint on Shelley's writings approaches more Zoe Bolton's discussion in "Collaborative Authorship and Shared Travel in History of Six Weeks' Tour". In other words, I see Shelley as sharing with PBS a great interest in the creative process as well as many other literary and philosophical views that were preoccupying the Romantics.

In Chapter one, I discuss Madame de Staël's treatment of improvisation especially as represented in the character of Corinne. I define who the improvisatrice is and what her talent for improvisation is by drawing from my interpretation of Madame de Staël's Corinne and from her other writings as well as from the extensive scholarship that has been done on Madame de Staël's representation of extempore poetry. Scholarly research on Corinne indicates that the philosophical aesthetics of the novel suggest a cosmopolitanism that stands in contrast to Napoleon's French Imperialism. Furthermore, I maintain that Corinne embraces an anti-utilitarian aesthetic. Drawing from scholarly research, I also point out the differences that exist between Corinne's first and second improvisation in order to show how through her relationship with Oswald, Corinne becomes increasingly despondent and regrets the loss of her genius. Corinne's talent for improvisation derives from a definition of enthusiasm that is based on Plato's view of inspiration in Phaedrus and Ion. For this, I base my argument on Madame de Staël's own definition of enthusiasm found in the closing Chapters of her De l'Allemagne. However, Madame de Staël's understanding of enthusiasm as represented in the character of Corinne does not exclude reason, which means that Corinne inherits both the emphasis on

emotion in the new emerging Romantic discourse as well as the stress on reason in Enlightenment thinking. Furthermore, I maintain that Corinne's increasing despondency in relation to the dissolution of her relationship with Oswald is a type of slow suicide that is an angered reaction against patriarchal constraints on the female gender role. I examine Madame de Staël's representation of how women artists of the nineteenth-century faced the conflict between having an artistic career and fame and the domestic affections. Because I place a great emphasis on the vast literary criticism that was written on improvisation and enthusiasm in relation to Madame de Staël, my Chapter one represents a background Chapter that will subsequently allow me to draw my conclusions about Madame de Staël's influence on Shelley, especially concerning the role of improvisation and enthusiasm.

In Chapter two, entitled "Mary Shelley and the art of improvisation", I address how Shelley takes an interest in the art of improvisation by examining her letters about the improvisatore Sgricci. I argue that Shelley's fascination with the Improvisatore Sgricci shows her involvement in the aesthetics of inspiration. Plato's theory of inspiration is important since Shelley is fascinated by the poetic madness, or the mythical state of inspiration embodied by the poet during the creative process. However, I also note how Shelley shows regret at the evanescence of the art of improvisation. Moreover, I examine Shelley's interest in aesthetics of inspiration through her fascination with another artist, Nicolò Paganini. Her enthusiastic reaction to this virtuoso violinist is linked to discourses about improvisatores in the Romantic period. Through Shelley's observations on the art of extempore poetry, I argue that there is a continuum of improvisation in her writings from the oral ballads and songs of the common people to the performance of the high-cultured improvisatrice. By reading her letters about the improvisatore Sgricci, I maintain that Shelley took a professional interest in the art of

improvisation as much as PBS, and this also evident by the fact that she records in her travel writings details that reveal that she paid close attention to the art of improvisation. Shelley shared her husband's interest in improvisation because ultimately both were interested in the creative process. As a result, I view Shelley and PBS as being "collaborators", as Bolton maintains.

In Chapter three, I explore the link between cosmology and aesthetics of inspiration through the role of music in Shelley's The Last Man. In my discussion of Shelley's novel, I argue that aspects such as the sublime, Necessity, prophecy, and Time can be understood by taking into account cosmology. I draw from discourses that associate the Alps with the primordial forces of creation. This leads me to assert that the enthusiasm that the characters experience in view of the sublimity of the Alps has a soothing impact on their wearied spirits. Furthermore, the performance of Haydn's Creation near Mont Blanc suggests an echo of the music of the spheres. However, this notion of universal harmony coexists with Necessity. The existential questions that are presented in Lionel's narrative are a result of the role of Necessity. Basing my views on PBS's determinism in Queen Mab and on Plato's Timaeus, I present several possible explanations of how Necessity operates in the narrative. Because Lionel's narrative is, however, only a reconstruction of the sibylline leaves by the frame narrator, the prophecy has the potential to be reinterpreted differently in another context and time or by another interpreter. This adds the dimension of freedom in the temporal order within which Necessity operates. The existential anxieties that are present in the characters are accompanied by a loss of an ordered understanding of the universe. Finally, I differentiate between relative and absolute time as well as between historical and cyclical time in Shelley's cosmology in order to show that both the eternal and the transient coexist in the novel.

Lastly, Chapter four concentrates on the different types of enthusiasm present in Shelley's writings. Adrian represents, as does Corinne, the Romantic notion of poet as prophet since he is a visionary whose enthusiasm, I argue, is central to the novel. The first part of my Chapter focuses on Corinne-inspired characters in Shelley's texts. In other words, I examine how characters, such as Beatrice in Valperga and Perdita in The Last Man, who pine away after the loss of a romantic partner mirror Madame de Staël's Corinne who dies of a slow-suicide after Oswald leaves her. In the second part of the chapter, I explore how crowd enthusiasm can pose a threat to civil society by drawing from the example of the French Revolution and the English Civil War. I also argue that Methodism is portrayed negatively because its religious enthusiasm is perceived to be divorced from reason and because its prophets are represented as being power-driven. Another meaning that I explore is how enthusiasm is associated with mental illness. In order to understand Shelley's treatment of religious enthusiasm and melancholia, I referred to discourses that were held about enthusiasm starting from the seventeen-century and that had an impact on writers of the Romantic era, despite the more positive connotations that the term had acquired by the nineteenth-century. Indeed, such philosophers as Henry More and John Locke reduced enthusiasm to physiological explanations in order to thwart its influence and contagion among the people. Despite her obvious dislike of Catholicism, Shelley borrows from the Catholic mystical tradition in order to depict devotional enthusiasm. In the third part of my Chapter, I argue that Shelley's favourite form of enthusiasm is tempered by reason. I maintain that Euthanasia's enthusiasm is based on a Godwinian system of the greater good and philosophy of reason. Drawing from Godwin, Kant, and Madame de Staël, I maintain, in the fourth part of my Chapter, that Adrian's benevolent actions towards his people are based on an enthusiasm that

is grounded on disinterestedness. I also associate Adrian with Millenarianism and perfectibility by arguing that he is a character that has reached a more advanced evolutionary state in comparison to the rest of humanity. Furthermore, language's inadequacy to express the enthusiasm experienced with sublime beauty is analyzed. The last part of my Chapter concentrates on how enthusiasm is linked with feelings of interconnectedness with the universe.

Corinne's Aesthetics and Victimization

Along with the Coppet group, Madame de Staël played a key role in establishing a Cosmopolitan Europe against Napoleon's Imperialism.[3] With her publication of De l'Allemagne in 1810, she helped to introduce German Romanticism to the rest of Europe, and she is thus one of the key figures to have helped initiate Romanticism as a movement. In light of recent scholarship done on the Improvisatrice, this chapter will attempt to define the philosophical aesthetics of Madame de Staël's theory of improvisation as represented in Corinne ou l'Italie. Through an investigation of her theoretical and fictional works, I will explore the author's understanding of improvisation and her views on the condition of women. I will argue that enthusiasm constitutes an essential element in Corinne's aesthetics of improvisation; that is, the author places the concept of enthusiasm in relation to the Enlightenment period's emphasis on reason. Furthermore, the portrayal of Corinne's deep despondency at the end of the narrative will be discussed in the context of nineteenth-century discourses linking genius with madness, as elucidated by current studies. Finally, her illness will be analyzed as possibly having psychosomatic origins and her death, or slow suicide, as a form of resistance against gendered power structures.

There is a mystery around what constitutes the Improvisatrice that has been expressed by the author, by characters in the novel, and by both critics and readers. At the end of the novel, Juliette asks her father: "Qu'est-ce que c'est que Corinne, mon père?" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 575). Juliette's question echoes future generations of readers and writers who would wonder about what defines the Improvisatrice. In relation to this speculation, Kari Lokke says

[3] I use the term cosmopolitanism in the sense of a peaceful dialogue between European nations. See my Introduction for a greater length discussion of the Coppet Group's cosmopolitanism against Napoleon's French imperialism.

that Corinne is "female genius": "unspeakable, indefinable, and vulnerable" ("Sibylline Leaves" 160). According to Marie-Claire Vallois, "le lecteur se trouve incapable de définir l'héroïne malgré le plus grand nombre de rôles qu'il à sa portée" (Fictions Féminines 130). This enigma around what defines the Improvisatrice was also expressed by Madame de Staël in a letter to a real improvisatrice, Tereza Bandettini, where she writes, "J'espère que vous me pardonnerez Madame, un désir presque indiscret de vous entendre ; c'est votre réputation qui me l'a inspiré" (Correspondance Générale Tome V 539). In the Romantic era, the high caliber poet was seen as a genius, a title reserved exclusively to male authors; however, Madame de Staël transgresses this conventional understanding of the poet by creating a woman genius. Despite the fact that female genius may be inexpressible within the patriarchal society of the early nineteenth century, a useful place where to start my project is to define the Improvisatrice,[4] and thus to establish her legacy among British women writers.

Corinne's artistic skills are numerous: she is able to dance, to act, to draw. She has all the artistic talents that most women in the nineteenth-century developed in order to make themselves marketable in the marriage market. By making Corinne mostly an Improvisatrice, Madame de Staël was in a way placing Corinne within the acceptable realm of artistic talents that young women of her time were pursuing. Christine Planté writes that improvisation is "une occasion de performance publique presque acceptable pour une femme parce que situable dans une continuité avec d'autres pratiques artistiques d'interprétation mieux connues en France (danse, chant, déclamation)" (96). Moreover, her art is, as Angelica Gooden points out,

[4] Erik Simpson argues that because "minstrelsy" was limited to a "male mode of performance", Madame de Staël, in formulating her theory of improvisation through Corinne, devised a cultural means by which women could envision themselves assuming the role of the minstrel (351). He further argues that the text "turns minstrelsy conventions upside down" by offering women for the first time a "matriarchal muse of minstrelsy, a means by which to connect the Sapphic tradition of women's performance to a modern, realistic heroine" (352). Thus, Corinne would become like a role model for future women writers such as Felicia Hemans and LEL.

"impermanent", not possible to convey in writing, and her talents for dancing and acting are also "transitory" (Delphine and Corinne 58). Thus, the ephemeral nature of Corinne's art renders it less threatening to patriarchy. However, the author departs from what is considered conventionally acceptable artistic interests for women in the early nineteenth century by having Corinne crowned at the Capitol, an honor traditionally reserved for male poets, and by making her a successor of Tasse and Petrarch.

Madame de Staël places Corinne within a tradition of historical literary women. The author's Improvisatrice belongs to a tradition of female poetesses such as Corinna, Sapho, Aspasia, and Corilla Olympica.[5] This is apparent when Corinne is exalted by Roman poets when she is about to be crowned:

> Tous l'exaltaient jusques aux cieux ; mais ils lui donnaient des louanges qui ne la caractérisaient pas plus qu'une autre femme d'un génie supérieur. C'était une agréable réunion d'images et d'allusions à la mythologie, qu'on aurait pu, depuis Sapho jusqu'à nos jours, adresser de siècle en siècle à toutes les femmes que leurs talents littéraires ont illustrées. (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 54)

Damien Zanone argues that the narrator describes Corinne's femininity in mythical characteristics. Zanone writes, "Le nom de Corinne apparaît escorté d'un cortège féminin prestigieux : outre la reine égyptienne, il y a Sapho, Armide, Didon, Juliette, Shéhérazade…Ces noms déclinent la féminité en autant d'attributs mythiques : la poétesse, la magicienne, l'amoureuse, la conteuse" (53). In similar fashion, Joan Dejean argues that the heroine's choice of name is an indication of her allegiance to a "community of literary women" (The Novel's Seductions 121). As Zanone and Dejean indicate, Madame de Staël

[5] In a very convincing essay that I will discuss shortly, Paola Giuli argues that Corinne may be linked to Corilla Olympica, a famous Italian improvisatrice of the eighteenth century.

situates Corinne within a tradition of distinguished literary heroines. Through the fate of these female figures, the author signal's how Corinne is to be understood as a woman who both represents and speaks for women's condition at large.

There is a strong likelihood that the character of the Improvisatrice has been based on a real Italian Improvisatrice, Corilla Olimpica. Corinne recounts that upon her arrival in Italy, she did not reveal her real name to anybody, but that instead she took the name of Corinna, because she liked the history of the famous Greek poetess (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 386). In one of her notes[6], Madame de Staël explains that Corinne should not be confused with Corilla Olimpica, but rather with Corinna, the famous Greek poetess (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 592). Despite Madame de Staël's denial, Paola Giuli traces the origins of Corinne to the famous eighteenth century Italian Improvisatrice, Corilla Olimpica, who was crowned at the Capitol for her poetic genius in 1776. Giuli explains that a comparison can be made between Madame de Staël's description of Corinne's crowning and existing documents on Corilla Olimpica's crowning ceremony (Giuli 167). The similarities between the two descriptions suggest that Madame de Staël must have consulted the documents that described the historical event (Giuli 173). However, Corilla being crowned as a poet laureate at the Capitol was met with hostile and sexist opposition because the honor had been historically reserved for male poets (Giuli 174). Giuli writes, "A highly prestigious honor, the crowning was historically and symbolically subversive of the ideology of feminine restraint, self-effacement, and literary inferiority" (172). This vitriolic and sexist criticism brought Corilla's literary fame to a downfall (Giuli 172). Giuli argues:

[6] Note 29 (592).

> Staël's feminist revisionist gaze reinterpreted Corilla's story according to Staël's liberal Romantic concerns and proposed it as a monitory image of the ephemeral nature of female literary stature in a patriarchal society, at the same time salvaging it from the ravages of time and prejudice. (165)

According to Giuli, Madame de Staël avoided to show an overt association between her character and Corilla in order to deflect criticism that was linked with Corilla's controversial fame (166). She maintains that "the figure of the improviser may be seen as a powerful symbol of the predicament of the female genius/writer—the oral nature of her art a symbol of the transience of her fame" (Giuli 182).[7] Because the fame and genius of Corilla was feared, there was a prevailing "desire to silence the woman improviser" in order to remove the threat she occasioned in a patriarchal society (Giuli 183). Thus, Madame de Staël rewrites the history of Corilla in her novel through the character of Corinne in order to voice women's rights at a time when the voice of the Improvisatrice was being silenced, and as a way to ensure "their very inscription in history, the possibility of leaving a mark, of creating a tradition, which would legitimize and empower future generations" (Giuli 184). Thus, the history of Corilla inspires Madame de Staël to create a character that would address the gender inequalities of the early nineteenth-century.

Another figure to which Corinne resembles is Sappho, the Greek poetess from Lesbos who lived in the early seventh century (B.C). Dejean explains that there are no indications that Madame de Staël read the original Sappho; she instead relied on the French tradition of fictions about Sappho, and on French translations of misinterpretations occurring in the Italian

[7] Giuli explains that the art of the improviser, being an oral rather than a written expression, was not regarded as an inferior poetic form, but in fact some considered it as a superior literary art. However, the presence of the female improviser especially after Corilla's crowning caused the status of the art of the improviser to fall and to be seen as an "effeminate" art (182-183).

tradition (Fictions of Sappho 161). Furthermore, there is no evidence that Madame de Staël was aware of German scholarship on Sappho, which attempted to eliminate the farfetched fictionalizations on the Greek poetess (Dejean Fictions of Sappho 161). However, Madame de Staël reinterprets Sappho by giving a "feminist twist" to eighteenth century patriarchal constructions of this ancient literary woman (Dejean Fictions of Sappho 161). According to Dejean, Madame de Staël goes beyond making Sappho/Delphine/Corinne characteristic of the woman abandoned by her male lover; she attempts to show a more in-depth vision of the "female condition" (Fictions of Sappho 162). Through Corinne's crowning at the Capitol, Madame de Staël signals that Corinne is more than simply a "Sappho figure", she is the "direct successor of Sappho" (Fictions of Sappho Dejean 177). Thus, Dejean's research indicates that by going beyond eighteenth century representations of the ancient Greek poetess, Madame de Staël reconstructs the myth of Sappho through Corinne in order to represent women's issues.

In addition to Corilla Olimpica and Sappho, Corinne brings to mind Aspasia, an ancient Greek courtesan. Melissa Ianetta argues that another figure to which Corinne may be compared to is Aspasia, a famous courtesan who was an expert in rhetoric and in philosophy in ancient Greece. Madame de Staël in her biography of Aspasia establishes her as a woman who displays political and literary talents (Oeuvres Complètes de Madame de Staël 297).[8] Ianetta explains that Corinne's improvisations may be analyzed in light of Aspasia's oratorical and improvisational skills. She writes:

> the most important link between Aspasia and Corinne lies in their contributions to the theorization of improvisational rhetoric, a persuasive strategy that revises

[8] Madame de Staël writes, "Une autre beauté d'Ionie, Thargélie, avait, avant Aspasie, donné l'example de la singulière réunion des talents politiques et littéraires, avec toutes les grâces de son sexe. Il paraît qu'Aspasie la prit pour modèle" ("Articles de Madame de Staël, inséré dans la biographie universelle" Œuvres complètes de Madame de Staël 297).

> culturally accepted rhetorical commonplaces and readily recognized arrangements patterns to create an extemporaneous performance adapted to an immediate exigency. (94)

Thus, Corinne's improvisations brought attention to the usual pattern that extempore poetry follows. Ianetta argues that scholars have overlooked the importance of improvisation in the understanding of the link between rhetorical and literary history (94). Drawing from Socrates' statement of Aspasia's oration,[9] Ianetta offers a definition of improvisation:

> Not merely the rhapsodic ability to create spontaneously a speech that moves an audience, improvisation is a multifaceted process that includes the ability to draw on extensive training and experience to create in the moment a speech that is honorable, effective, and appropriate to the occasion. (98)

The improviser draws upon previous material which the audience recognizes and delights in, and plays upon presenting it in pleasing manner (Ianetta 98). For instance, Corinne, during her first improvisation, is asked to improvise on the glory and happiness of Italy (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 59). Thus, Corinne's audience most probably is already acquainted with the subject of her improvisation and feels passionate about it. Corinne's task is to please her audience by communicating both hers and her spectators' enthusiasm about the topic. Jennifer Birkett states, "Construction of an improvisation is a matter of mixing learned discourse, technical skill, and rhetorical competence with spontaneous and enthusiastic inspiration" (400). Birkett's definition of improvisation indicates the versatility required in order to have

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[9] Ianetta is basing her argument on Plato's "Menexenus", where Aspasia's creation of a funeral oration is discussed by Socrates and Menexenus. Socrates says:

> I heard Aspasia compose a funeral oration about these very dead. For she had been told, as you were saying, that the Athenians were going to choose a speaker, and she repeated to me the sort of speech which he should deliver—partly improvising and partly from previous thought, putting together fragments of the funeral oration which Pericles spoke, but which I believe she composed. (The Collected Dialogues of Plato 188)

Corinne's talent for extempore poetry. Ianetta argues that "Corinne's improvisation echoes Aspasia's famous funeral oration" (103). This is evident by the fact that she not only speaks of the national glories of Italy but her speech falls within the genre of the *epitaphios* because during the happiness of her improvisation there seems to be an unspoken demand from Oswald reproaching Corinne for not addressing his grief (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 64-65). According to Ianetta, Corinne's oration follows the pattern of the *epitaphios*— "commendation, praise for the ancestors, praise for the country, praise for the dead, consolation" — (103).[10] As Laurence Guellec argues, she thus becomes "a médiatrice du sentiment national" (81). Thus, the *epitaphios* would stir national sentiments in the audience, which means that Corinne's improvisation is a reaction against Napoleon's Imperialism. In addition, Birkett maintains:

> The starting material consists of poetic clichés, quotations, borrowings from the common cultural stock. This material—the social given—is transformed as Corinne glimpses through it some inspiration of her own. At its best, her improvisations are a fusion of subjective and collective inspiration, bringing together personal and public preoccupations. (400-401)

Thus, one of the public's preoccupations that Corinne's first improvisation would bring to mind is the hope of Italy's unification and independence[11], especially under Napoleon's invasions. Moreover, Planté argues that Corinne's improvisation is not dependent on memory since her art is dialogic: it occurs in interaction with her audience. Planté writes:

[10] Ianetta is drawing from George Kennedy's description of *epitaphios* in The Art of Persuasion in Greece. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963.
[11] See my introduction about Italy's developing national consciousness.

> Quant à la pratique même telle qu'elle la décrit, si elle lui conserve le thème imposé, le caractère à la fois à l'improviste et dialogique, car impliquant une relation avec le public, elle y minimise le rôle de la mémoire et, pour partie, des vers. (96).

As Planté explains, Corinne's art is dialogic because it stems from an interaction with the public. In line with Planté's statement, Avriel H. Golberger points out that Madame de Staël, in "De l'esprit des traductions", does not favor mere imitation but rather active emulation (353).[12] Goldberger writes, "Madame de Staël fait partie de la lignée honorable de ceux qui cherchent par la traduction à abattre les murs des prisons culturelles, donc forcément intellectuelles et spirituelles, où, privés d'elle, nous vivrions" (359). This idea of cosmopolitanism is incorporated in Corinne's aesthetics. Despite the likeness between Aspasia's rhetorical skills and the heroine's performances, Corinne's improvisation is not a mere imitation of the ancients; her art rather integrates past forms while admitting alterity.[13]

During her travels in Italy Madame de Staël meets a real Improvisatrice, with whom she becomes greatly impressed. In a letter dated on the 16th of May of 1805 in Florence, Madame de Staël writes:

> Mais il y a une signora Landi, Mme Mazzei à présent, qui est tout à fait extraordinaire. Elle improvise sans chanter, sans s'arrêter une minute, et avec un talent très supérieur elle improvise une scène de tragédie. Je lui ai donné la reconnaissance d'Iphigénie en Tauride avec Oreste, et je vous assure que c'était

[12] My translation.
Madame de Staël writes that an active emulation would gradually bring back originality of spirit and truth of style, without which there is no literature (296 "De l'esprit des traductions »). (also quoted by Goldberger on p.353).

[13] Angela Wright indicates, "Corinne half-Italian and half-English, does not simply reproduce the values and charms of the groups that produced her, but she also acts as a point where a multitude of different national, class, and gender values intersect and interact, opening the potential for something radically refreshing" (4).

> une scène qu'on pouvait écrire telle qu'elle l'a dite. Mais imaginez-vous une énorme personne qui, à vingt-trois ans, a l'air de quarante, des yeux louches, point de physionomie, point de gestes qu'un mouvement d'éventail dans le moment le plus intéressant, enfin une idole égyptienne, une statue de Memnon sur laquelle on dirait que l'inspiration tombe mais qu'elle ne reste pas. C'est tout à fait curieux à voir et unique à entendre. (Correspondance générale 559).

According to Simone Balayé, it is after she witnesses Madame Mazzei improvise that she changes her views on the art of Improvisation and becomes inspired to make Corinne an improvisatrice (Les carnets de voyage de Madame de Staël 114). In the above passage, Madame de Staël proposes a subject to Madame Mazzei to improvise. It was common that the audience or a member of the audience would ask the poet improviser to improvise on a topic. Angela Esterhammer in "The Improviser's Disorder" defines improvisation:

> 'Improvisation,' in this era, was the art practiced by the male *improvisatore* or the female *improvisatrice*, a performer who produced spontaneous poetry, responding to a given occasion or to a subject proposed by the audience, within the limits of a certain metre and genre, usually with musical accompaniment. (330)

The description of this art form is also portrayed by Madame de Staël when Corinne asks from her audience the subject of her improvisation before the crowning ceremony (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 59). Furthermore, on the 14th of February 1805, Madame de Staël attends a meeting at the Roman academy of Arcadia under the name of the Greek poetess Tellesilla Argoica,

where she recites her translation of Onofrio Minzoni's poem, "sur la mort de Jésus-Christ".[14] She relates that the audience was so impressed with her performance that there was massive round of applause, and several of the Arcadians paid her tribute by dedicating poetry to her. She was proclaimed Arcadian and received a diploma with a seal from the Academy. Balayé notes that the success and pleasure she experienced from the event gave her the idea to also have Corinne feel the same emotion (Les carnets de voyage de Madame de Staël 181). Thus, the author's curiosity is moved by the genius required to perform a talented improvisation but also by the fame that Improvisatrices enjoy, which inspires her to create Corinne an Improvisatrice.

By teaching her niece Juliette her artistic talents, Corinne ensures that there will be a transmission of her female artistic legacy to future generations of women. Balayé notes that there is hope at the end of the narrative; the child, through Corinne's teachings, will realize a fusion of the three characters—Oswald, Corinne Lucille—a new being will succeed where they failed (Écrire, Lutter, Vivre 109). This is apparent in the novel when Corinne is ill, but teaches her niece, Juliette, her artistic skills as if she wanted to transmit an heritage of poetic enthusiasm to her woman kin, and hoped that female artistic genius will be carried on in future generations (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 575). Giuli observes:

> In creating Juliette, Staël made of this relationship a symbol of female artistic patronage and heritage; a symbol of the possibility of a legacy being handed down, if not on the written pages of history, then on a personal level, from generation to generation, from woman to woman, from teacher to pupil—in the spirit of contemporary Italian affidamento. (172)

[14] This event is described by Madame de Staël in a letter to Vincenzo Monti from Rome on the 15th of February 1805.

According to Nancy K. Miller, the transmission of a female artistic lineage acts like "a subversive enterprise within patriarchy" (196). However, Ellen Peel qualifies this idea by pointing out that under Corinne's guidance the female youths become like "clones" to her. In other words, her teachings are ultimately very controlling, which dispossesses her pupils of the freedom of self-definition that she once enjoyed ("Corinne's Shift to Patriarchal Mediation" 104-105). Another possible interpretation for creating Juliette is that by transmitting her artistic heritage to her niece, Oswald would be punished by having to remember Corinne in the figure of his daughter. The narrator says, "Juliette prenait une leçon de musique. Elle tenait une harpe en forme de lyre, proportionnée à sa taille, de la même manière que Corinne ; et ses petits bras et jolis regards l'imitaient parfaitement" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 575). On the other hand, Margaret R. Higonnet argues that Juliette represents Corinne's "double", her "only resurrection available" ("Suicide As Self-Construction" 75). Through Juliette, she thus ensures and establishes her fame and memory posthumously. Overall, there is ambivalence in the manner in which Corinne transmits her artistic lineage to her niece Juliette since she may be controlling her niece or even trying to punish Oswald.

The history of the term 'improvisatrice' originates in the Italian language, and it got introduced to the English via the French from Letitia Elizabeth Landon who was inspired by Madame de Staël. In large part, the word improvisatrice was established in the French language by Madame de Staël's Corinne,[15] and, as Erik Simpson has pointed out, it was later admitted to the English language by Landon (351).[16] It is a term that originates in the Italian tradition of improvisators and improvisatrices who were renowned for creating poetry

[15] Petit Robert
[16] Simpson explains, "The publication of The Improvisatrice (by L.E.L) is perhaps the point at which "improvisatrice" becomes a widely recognizable term in English, although the word had been used a few times before, and the readers of the French language Corinne would have recognized it" (351).

extempore for an audience that proposed a topic. Rinaldina Russell explains how the art of improvisation became popular in Italy:

> By mid-eighteenth century the prestige of the (Italian) academies has fallen considerably. Literary activity becomes less elitist, and poetry turns into a form of entertainment, a centerpiece for social occasions. Consistent with this trend was the phenomenon of the poet improvisers, with many women among them. Their skill in improvising long passages of poetry on a given topic at organized events was astonishing even to skeptics, and many reputable literati paid tribute to them. (xxi)

Moreover, Corinne's unconventionality, her Italianism that sets her apart from feminine English behavior and disfavors her in Oswald's eyes, is related to the fact that her talent for improvisation is a poetic form that is alien to English literary structures. John Playfair, in his review of Corinne in 1807, draws attention to this characteristic when he writes, "Corinna is represented as excelling in the character of an Improvisatrice, so peculiar to Italy, and so intimately connected with the flowing and sonorous language of that country" (Edinburgh Review 11 (1807) 191). Simpson explains that improvisation "and its incompatibility with England was more than a trick of vocabulary. Improvisation was consistently portrayed as a process foreign in every sense to England" (347). It can be said, however, that the term remains a peculiarity even today in the English language, and it is thus a word that is historically specific to the Romantic period, and more particularly to the Romantic poetess.

A link can be made between the art of conversation practiced in salons of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and Corinne's talent for improvisation. Jennifer Birkett defines Corinne's "improvisatory process" as "a dynamic model of the subject's founding in

intersubjectivity, within a process of discursive exchange in which the individual is engaged both as an autonomous self-creating subject and as a representative of the groups of which society is constituted" (94). Corinne says that improvisation for her is like an animated conversation, which means that she prefers her art to be created in dialogues with others, not just in mere personal contemplation (Corinne Balayé ed. 2000, 57).[17] Balayé, discussing the author's salon, links conversation to the art of improvisation: "Elle parle, elle fait parler les autres et fait briller leurs idées et les siennes. La conversation est l'instrument dont elle joue merveilleusement pour séduire. Joie spontanée[18] de la création sans travail et sans peine, qui ressemble à l'improvisation poétique, à la parole inspirée de la Sibylle, de la prêtresse d'Apollon" (Lumière et liberté 34). According to Dejean, Corinne emerges from the "novelistic legacy" of the "seventeenth century French salon" where women "tried out their ideas first in conversation, and only subsequently passed them to writing" (The Novel's Seductions 119). These women writers were able to invent their fictional models within a "female literary community", where they were not constrained by "male literary authority" (The Novel's Seductions 119).[19] Dejean explains that Corinne has been criticized by both

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[17] Alain Vaillant et al. argue:

> De fait, moins que le discours public et à effet, le vrai modèle, pour Madame de Staël, est l'entretien où de grands esprits, échangeant librement leurs points de vue, contribuent à une sorte d'entreprise collective. Ses romans reviennent constamment sur les charmes supérieurs de la conversation, et il est bien possible, au-delà de l'anecdote biographique, que sa plus brillante réussite soit d'avoir constitué avec le groupe Coppet, la seule œuvre réellement plurielle et dialogique de la littérature moderne, dont les textes isolés des uns et des autres (Schlegel, Constant, Sismondi, Mme de Staël elle-même) ne seraient que les témoignages incomplets, et comme les traces fragmentaires d'un chef-d'œuvre à jamais disparu. (31-32)

[18] In relations to this idea of spontaneity, Wright explains that Oswald and Corinne's quarrels are originally articulated "in letter form rather than in conversation" (5). She writes, "The movement from the spontaneity of debate to the more crafted, formal, epistolary mode of expression is indicative both of their national differences and their ideas on gender" (5).

[19] As Dejean points out, even though Madame de Staël was influenced by this type of salon experience, her father's disapproval of female authorship marked her (The Novel's Seductions 120). Dejean writes,

> Thus Staël's salon education was counterbalanced by powerful, first-hand experience of the prohibition against women's writing, a *nom du père* that eventually led, in Corinne, to a

nineteenth-century and recent critics for the fact that the novel's conversational style disrupts the narrative (The Novel's Seductions 121). Yet, Dejean argues that this conversational form which intercepts the plot is an indication of the author's "sense of literary heritage…a way of keeping the oral, female verb alive in literature" (The Novel's Seductions 121). Dejean writes, "Corinne's mother tongue is oral, the art of conversation, the spirit of improvisation. Corinne 'comes to language' with her improvisations" (The Novel's Seductions 121).[20] Drawing from Balayé, Patrick H. Vincent argues that Corinne's improvisations are characterized by "generic instabilities" which have their origins in Madame de Staël's salon conversations (25). He writes that her poetry should be interpreted as "an intermediary genre between oral and written verse, but also between poetry proper and philosophical discourse" (25). Thus, the oral nature of Corinne's improvisations can be traced back to Madame de Staël's salon experiences with conversation.

Although the novel is written within the context of the Enlightenment movement, Corinne's aesthetics of improvisation espouse Romanticism's stress on emotion. In relation to French poetry, Christine Planté writes, "Corinne paraît donc présenter une esthétique impure, qu'on pourrait dire de transition" (97). Indeed, when Corinne says: "J'ose dire cependant que je n'ai jamais improvisé sans qu'une émotion vraie ou une idée que je croyais nouvelle ne m'ait animée" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 83), she approaches William Wordsworth's poetical

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> rejection of the *nom du père*, or a disnaming process such as Cixous describes. (The Novel's Seductions 120)

Thus, paternal prohibition is reflected by the fact that Madame de Staël's heroine, Corinne, abandons her patronymic name in order to assume her vocation a female artist.

[20] In relation to this idea about the oral nature of Corinne's poetry, Christine Planté argues that Corinne's improvisations have "a fictive triple transcription where they are transmitted from the oral to the written form, from the Italian to the French, and from verse to prose" ("Une mélodie intellectuelle" 69). She maintains that Corinne's improvisations "cannot be reproduced but only imperfectly suggested; while this strategy allows the author to convey that the heroine's genius is inimitable, it also permits her to try, through the guise of fiction, translation, and cultural difference, a poetic writing in prose" ("Une mélodie intellectuelle" 68-69). (My translation).

aesthetics by her emphasis on emotion.[21] Planté says, "Le nouvel art qu'elle définit ainsi se rapproche de ce qu'on entendra par poésie dans une conception romantique et post-romantique, en raison, de la place faite à l'émotion, et de l'ouverture à la fois sur l'objet et sur l'autre du sujet, transporté par son exaltation et par l'enthousiasme du public" (97). Similarly, Esterhammer argues, "the representation of Corinne's words as prose, rather than rhymed poetry, actually supports Corinne's and Staël's programmatic re-definition of improvisation as a conversational genre in which shared feeling should predominate over beautiful sounds" (Romanticism and Improvisation 91) Even though Romanticism, as a movement, was not yet established in France, Madame de Staël gestures towards it by her emphasis on emotion in Corinne's improvisations, while at the same time conveying the philosophical ideals of the eighteenth century.

In addition to the emphasis on emotion, the aesthetics of the Improvisatrice convey multiplicity as opposed to singleness of mind. It is this multiplicity in Corinne that marks her as mysterious in Oswald's eyes. In a letter to Oswald, Corinne explains her sense of self:

> ce qu'il vous plaît d'appeler en moi de la magie, c'est un naturel sans contrainte qui laisse voir quelquefois des sentiments divers et des pensées opposées, sans travailler à les mettre d'accord ; car cet accord, quand il existe, est presque toujours factice, et la plupart des caractères vrai sont inconséquent. (159)[22]

Corinne's creativity is a result of the diversity of sentiments and thoughts within her. Lokke points out Corinne's "acceptance of the contradictions and multiplicity within her" (Tracing Women's Romanticism 45). For Corinne genius is creative not imitative; she stresses diversity

[21] Wordsworth writes, "I have said that Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling: it takes its origin from emotion recollected intranquility" ("Preface to Lyrical Ballads" 886)
[22] Also quoted by Lokke p. 45 Tracing Women's Romanticism.

in thinking (177).[23] However, Whitman suggests that both her affective fixation on Oswald and the possessive nature of his love push her to a "singleness" in her interests that destroys the "multiplicity" of her capability for interaction with others (59). Corinne, for Oswald's sake, attempts to embrace, in Lokke's term, a "unity of self"[24] that conforms to her lover's notions of proper feminine behavior, which, according to his view, English women are a model. Lokke writes, "Thus the concept of the unity of self becomes a metaphysical construct profoundly destructive to Corinne's sense of self-worth and self-knowledge" (Tracing Women's Romanticism 45). She describes Corinne's artistic endeavor as being a "result of collective efforts" as opposed to the "solitary Romantic genius" that often distinguishes the melancholy of the Byronic hero (Tracing Women's Romanticism 40). Furthermore, Birkett argues that although the novel recognizes constraints placed on women's voice, "it also offers a construction of the ideal feminine voice as one which aims to generate from within those limits a different model of speaking and being, directed towards openness, pluralism, and the negotiation of exchange" (397). Christine Pouzoulet maintains that Corinne's crowning at the Capitol "celebrates a people and its history rather than a leader, which is in itself an anti-Napoleonic act" ("Une mélodie intellectuelle" 208).[25] As Angelica Gooden argues, Corinne's crowning recalls "Napoleon's crowning as emperor" and of the fact that he designated himself as King of Italy in 1805 (Madame de Staël: The Dangerous Exile 162). As opposed to Napoleon's military power, the novel conveys a "female sovereign principle" that emphasizes the power of "feeling and imagination" (Gooden The Dangerous Exile 162). Corinne loses her

[23] Corinne says, "Le génie est essentiellement créateur, il porte le caractère de l'individu qui le possède. La nature qui n'a pas voulu que deux feuilles se ressemblassent, a mis encore plus de diversités dans les âmes, et l'imitation est une espèce de mort, puisqu'elle dépouille chacun de son existence naturelle" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 177).
[24] Tracing Women's Romanticism 45
[25] My translation. Unless otherwise stated, all further translations of Pouzoulet's article are mine.

creativity by trying to conform to Oswald's ideal femininity; nevertheless, Corinne's aesthetics embrace multiplicity, as opposed to the homogeneity in thinking espoused by Napoleon's regime.

In addition to the multiplicity found in the Improvisatrice, one can detect that Madame de Staël's aesthetics and philosophy are against Napoleon's oppressive regime.[26] Gooden notes that Madame de Staël "depicts all of Italy's artistic masterpieces in their original location, not robbed by Napoleon for the purpose of displaying them in France's museums" (Delphine and Corinne 61). Indeed, Gooden maintains, "It was her attack on the institutional subjugation of her sex, as well as her praise of English values, her discussion of delicate issues such as divorce, and her refusal to glorify him in her writings, that did the damage" (Dangerous Exile 179). This is one of the reasons that Napoleon judged the novel to be "unpatriotic" (Gooden, Delphine and Corinne 61). Alain Vaillant et al. write, "À la tyrannie de la violence, qu'incarne à ses yeux Napoléon Bonaparte, elle ne cessera d'opposer la force de la littérature, qui n'est rien d'autre que l'enthousiasme du Verbe mis au service de la pensée" (31). Through her aesthetics and unconventional philosophy, Madame de Staël resists Napoleon's regime by refusing to conform to his will.

The philosophical aesthetics expressed in the novel suggest a cosmopolitanism that is typical of the Coppet group. In conversation with her group of friends, during Lord Edgermond's visit, Corinne stresses national individuality—originality in sentiments and spirit—(Corinne Balayé ed. 2000, 176). In "Madame de Staël et l'Europe napoléonienne", Balayé explains, "enlightened people of the time were not insensitive to differences among nations, but, despite what they were starting to learn from travel narratives and other sources

[26] Balayé points out that there is the absence of French domination in the novel, and indicates that the main plot occurs in 1795, before the Italian wars ("Madame de Staël et l'Europe napoléonienne" 27).

of information, they still believed that humanity could arrive at a unique civilization" (28).[27] Balayé writes, "'Ce qui convient aux Français, dira Napoléon, convient à tous.' Madame de Staël ne partage aucune de ces positions…Elle tient à l'originalité des peuples, facteur d'enrichissement pour tous, et n'accepte pas de sacrifier l'individu à la nation, ni l'un ni l'autre à de grands empires échafaudés par la conquête et voués à l'écroulement" ("Madame de Staël et l'Europe napoléonienne" 28). In the narrative, le comte d'Erfeuil considers French literature as being the best model that the whole world should imitate (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 176). He is opposed to any mixtures—any foreign influences on French literature (Corinne 177). Gérard Gengembre argues that the comte d'Erfeuil represents a Napoleonic ideology, and as Angela Wright maintains he is a "cultural isolationist" (88). Susan Tenenbaum maintains that the Coppet circle believed that:

> aesthetic conventions (were) paradigmatic of their particular socio-historical situation. By adopting classicism as his official aesthetic doctrine, Napoleon denied the process of historical change to promote the sterile limitation of archaic models…Being rules-centered it fostered an imitative culture, limiting imagination and invention by cutting off the values and affections implicit in indigenous traditions (364).

In this way, Gengembre holds that Madame de Saël denounces French imperialism ("Corinne, Roman Politique" 90). He writes, "D'erfeuil veut une Europe française et non pas le concert des nations…Ce refus du mélange au nom de la pureté est dénoncé pour sa stérélité. La culture nationale se forge dans la fécondité des échanges, thèse Staëlienne et coopétienne bien connue" (Gengembre, "Corinne, Roman Politique" 90). In response to le comte d'Erfeuil's

[27] My translation. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent translations of Balayé's texts are mine.

point of view, Corinne answers that this lack of innovation proposed by le comte d'Erfeuil, would end up making French literature "sterile" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 177). Tenenbaum indicates that the Coppet group's ideology espoused "respect for indigeneous tradition combined with open channels of communication" (367). In opposition to Comte d'Erfeuil's conformity, le Prince Castel-Forte proposes a dialogue between nations—that recalls the cosmopolitanism of the Coppet group. He says, "Il me semble que nous avons tous besoin les uns des autres; la littérature de chaque pays découvre, qui sait la connaître, une nouvelle sphère d'idées" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 177). Wright states, "Corinne and Castel-Forte's openness to debate and cultural exchange situates them in strong opposition to the isolated Count d'Erfeuil" (4). Tenenbaum argues, "In contrast, to the closed, static, uniform order represented by Napoleonic hegemony, Coppet offered the model of an open society founded on respect for European diversity and dedicated to the project of cultural cross-fertilization" (361). It may thus be argued that the novel's cosmopolitanism is a reflection of the intellectual activity of the Coppet group and a reaction against Napoleon's Imperialism.

Sympathy with the audience is a necessary ingredient for Corinne's improvisation. There is a bond between the Improvisatrice and the audience, which is especially notable when Corinne changes the tone of her improvisation when she notices Oswald's melancholic and mournful air during her first improvisation (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 64-65).[28] Given the fact that Corinne does not know Oswald at this early point in the narrative, it is through an imaginative sympathy[29] that she understands his pain and enters in bond with him. Madame de Staël writes, "Une voix qui se brise, un visage altéré, agissent sur l'âme directement comme

[28] In relation to this event, Simpson delimits another element in Corinne's improvisation: "the ability to change directions during composition" (356).
[29] Adam Smith writes that when we enter in sympathy with another "it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations" (11).

les sensations; la pensée ne se met point entre deux, c'est un choc, c'est une blessure. Cela n'est point intellectuel ; et ce qu'il y a de plus sublime encore dans cette disposition de l'homme, c'est qu'elle est consacrée particulièrement à la faiblesse" (De l'influence des passions 245).[30] By mainly stressing the sensations and the non-intellectual, she is emphasizing the importance of sympathy. Vincent Whitman defines this type of sympathetic identification in Corinne's art as an "empathetic capability" (59). Furthermore, the author connects enthusiasm with sympathy to show that for Corinne being in a state of inspiration is inclusive with being in community with others. Thus, Corinne's enthusiasm is generated through an outburst of sympathy that occurs in communion with others and creates her improvisation.

The author brings attention to the improvisation of the common people because of the power it exerts on the imagination. As Wordsworth who brought attention to the plight of the poor in Lyrical Ballads, Corinne also says that she likes the improvisation of the common people (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 83). She argues that their improvisation gives something poetic to the lower-classes and lets us witness their imagination (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 84). She relates that "when the Sicilians utter in verse a long farewell to the travelers, it is as if a breath of heaven acts on men's imagination like the wind on the aeolian harp, and that poetry is the echo of nature" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 84).[31] Indeed, Madame de Staël says that "the common people are closer to being real poets than people of good society" (De l'Allemagne I 206). Basically, Corinne states that the common people are closer to nature and by implication

[30] Patrick H. Vincent argues that Madame de Staël can be placed with other "British novelist, poets and writers who developed and popularized the cult of feeling" (5). He maintains that the author's ideas about sympathy were influenced by David Hume's A Treatise of Human Nature (1739-1740), Jean-Jacques Rousseau's On the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men (1755), and Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759).
[31] My translation. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent translations of Madame de Staël's texts are mine.

to the transcendental, so their poetry has the potential to stir the audience's imagination. Similarly to Wordsworth and Coleridge who imitated the ballad form of the common people in Lyrical Ballads, Madame de Staël recognizes the value of the improvisation of the lower classes, where it is found in its most unaffected and spontaneous form.

By stressing the poetry found in the people, Madame de Staël stresses orality as being an authentic poetry.[32] Jon Mee writes, "There is no doubt that the immediacy associated with enthusiasm was often figured in terms of nostalgic orality" (58). Similarly, Esterhammer argues, "The ubiquity of print might help explain the Romantic era's fascination with improvisatori and improvisatrici, if their oral poetry responds to nostalgia for a more authentic, pre-literate past" ("The Improviser's Disorder" 68). Although the Improvisatrice also composes written text, she mainly conveys her art orally. Madame de Staël argues that "the invention of print made necessary divisions, summaries, and all that pertains to logic" (De l'Allemagne II 65). She points to the fact that "the philosophical works of the Ancients were dialogues that we represent mainly as written documents" (De l'Allemagne II 65). She holds that "a man of genius is more interesting when he shows himself to be as he is, and that his books seem more improvised than composed" (De l'Allemagne II 65). It is worthy of note that she emphasizes improvisation rather than composition. By mainly improvising rather than composing, Corinne is thus not impulsive but in the tradition of the ancients, so there is no mechanical structure or artificiality, but rather authenticity, and nostalgia for the past.[33] When Corinne is considering whether to write to Oswald, the narrator says: "Lui écrire ! Tant de mesure est nécessaire en écrivant ! et Corinne était sur-tout aimable par l'abandon et le

[32] Wordsworth and Coleridge, inspired by Thomas Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, were also interested in the orality found in the common people and in folk culture, especially as manifested in the ballad form. (Bruce E. Graver 38-48).
[33] The past, meaning pre-modernity.

naturel" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 124). Contrary to Corinne's inclination, which is to flow with her inspiration, the obstacle of the written word as opposed to the spoken is that it requires a more severe control of conventionality, and thus it implies artificiality.[34] However, it is worthy to note that Catriona Seth points out how there is indication in the text to suggest that Corinne is an "improvisatrice who composes"[35] ("'À sa voix, tout sur la terre se change en poésie'" 146). Overall, there is this emphasis in Madame de Staël's writings that the improvised word is more authentic than premeditated composition.

However, Madame de Staël is unimpressed with improvisatores who merely repeat old improvisational patterns without adding any thoughtfulness or sincerity to their utterances. In De La Littérature, Madame de Staël argues that the Italian Improvisers who are renowned for their ability to create poetry as promptly and with the easiness of human speech are at a disadvantage. She believes that this creative facility that the Italian poet has is due to melodious sounds of the Italian language (De La Littérature 199).[36] However, Madame de Staël does not think that this helps the Italian Improviser to distinguish between the "subtle differences in the flow of thoughts and nuances of feeling, which need to be deepened by meditation" (De La Littérature 199). Furthermore, the negative views on Italian poet improvisers that Madame de Staël expresses in De La Littérature are also present in Corinne. When Oswald and Lucile are together in Italy, they are visited by an Italian improvisatore who

[34] Despite the author's emphasis on orality, printing her texts gave her a certain political power, which Napoleon attempted to regulate. Mee explains that print was seen as a "form of healthy regulation, because it could be regarded as easily monitored" (59). Yet, by the end of the eighteenth century, print was seen with more caution because it could "allow the endless repetition of ungoverned enthusiasm" (Mee 59). Because Madame de Staël's novel was published and circulated among the masses, the enthusiasm displayed in the novel was thus communicated with a potential to influence the crowd. This would have seemed as especially threatening to Napoleon who censured her works and exiled Madame de Staël for her political ideas.

[35] My translation

[36] Corinne also states a similar point of view when she is asked about her talent for improvisation. She says, "L'Italien a un charme musical qui fait trouver du plaisir dans le son des mots presque indépendamment des idées" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 83).

is described as being very black and "with features created for expression but to which was missing the soul" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 555). The fact that he "continuously used exclamations and gestures", and was like a "machine" that is programmed to play without stopping for an interval of time reinforces the idea that he is without a soul (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 555). When he improvised, there was exaggeration as if there was no link between words and truth (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 555). Truth is an important aspect of improvisation for Madame de Staël; in other words, the improviser must look into his "âme" to find inspiration that is related to virtue, and not merely repeat clichés. The narrator says, "Il se mit dès la porte à improviser des vers tout remplis de louanges sur la mère, l'enfant et l'époux ; de ces louanges qui convenaient à toute les mères, à tous les enfants, à tous les époux du monde" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 555). Madame de Staël disapproves of the fact that his improvisation is a mere repetition of old patterns, and that there is no newness of ideas in his statements. He, however, was making use of the "harmonious sounds" of the Italian language; his declamation was so inflated that as a result the "insignificance" of his statements were more pronounced (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 555). For Madame de Staël, beauty of style should not merely exist for decorous purposes, but should be accompanied with true sentiments, which will in turn inspire aesthetically pleasing moral expressions: "la beauté du style n'est point, il faut en convenir, un avantage purement extérieur; car les sentiments vrais inspirent presque toujours les expressions les plus nobles et les plus justes" (De l'Allemagne 161). In short, beauty of poetic style is interlinked with truth and morality for the author.

Research suggests that Improvisatores were suspected of exercising their art merely for economic gain, and were dismissed as being superficial. In the above instance, the improvisatore's black body is without a soul, and his exaggerated expressions and gestures

suggest that he is of lower-class. Esterhammer explains that "improvisers are, for one thing, perennially vulnerable to the accusation that they are in it for the money" ("The Improviser's Disorder" 333). Esterhammer's research shows how the Improviser was often suspected as being driven not for the love of his art but out of "avarice" ("The Improviser's Disorder" 330). Esterhammer writes,

> The nineteenth-century *improvvisatore* is prone to being characterized as a superficial, money-grubbing, exploitative species of poet and actor, in contrast to serious, literary writers who are seeking to distance themselves from suspicions of commercialism. ("The Improviser's Disorder" 333)

Thus, there are the issues of "race" and class that are linked to the form of art that is performed, and which Madame de Staël disparages and treats as a parody of real genius.[37] In contrast to Corinne, the nameless improviser's oration has no "âme", or profoundness of thoughts. Similarly, Esterhammer explains that descriptions of improvisers in the nineteenth century often stress "economic, class, and ethnic distinctions" ("The Improviser's Disorder 333). Moreover, Esterhammer writes:

> Relying on external appearance and a mechanical facility for recitation, the importunate *improvvisatore* who bursts through the door of Lord and Lady Nelvil's lodgings succeeds only in exposing his ignorance of the requirements of good improvisation, which Corinne defines early in the novel as emotional and spiritual involvement, original ideas, and a bond of sympathy between performer and audience. ("The Improviser's Disorder" 333)

[37] Oswald describes the performance of the improviser as parody and compares it to the genius of Corinne. (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 555)

Thus, the author insists on the importance for improvisatores to have an "âme" in order to show profoundness of thought and not merely repeat clichés or follow a mechanical style.

In De la littérature, Madame de Staël theorizes on rhetorical skills by linking morality with eloquence. She claims that "the first of truths, morality, is also the most fruitful source for eloquence";[38] whenever we withhold truth, we "cannot be eloquent"; (De la littérature 396 & 397). She holds that "eloquence can only be composed of moral ideas and virtuous sentiments" (De la littérature 399). She compares "eloquence to an electrical commotion that the moral being also possesses the principle" (De la littérature 400). This electrical commotion may be connected to enthusiasm—the ability to move others with sentiments and ideas. In fact, addressing the rhetoricians, she argues that "the soul needs exaltation"; she counsels them to "seize this inclination in others, to enflame this desire, and thus to remove opinion" (De la littérature 401). Madame de Staël says, "In what characterizes eloquence, the movement that inspires it, the genius that develops it, there is a need of great independence" (De la littérature 402). "Morality is inexhaustible in sentiments and in ideas for the man of genius"; "it is with this help that he feels strong and surrenders without fear to his inspiration" (De la littérature 397). Drawing from Madame de Staël's arguments, it can be argued that Corinne succeeds as public performer because she has both eloquence and the independence of spirit to elevate herself above public opinion concerning proper feminine behavior and pursue her artistic endeavors.

Moreover, the source of her inspiration is linked with morality despite the fact that her improvisations are aesthetically pleasing. When asked about the source of her inspiration,

[38] My translation

Corinne says, "quelquefois cet intérêt[39] m'élève au-dessus de mes forces, me fait découvrir des vérités audacieuses, des expressions pleines de vie que la réflexion solitaire n'aurait pas fait naître" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 85). Corinne's statement can be related to Madame de Staël's conviction that "eloquence is based on truth, and that it is only reasoning that can distort truth because sentiment cannot be false in itself", but "it is the consequences that argumentation draws from sentiment that could be false" (De la littérature 405). Furthermore, she argues that it is "only through eloquence that the virtues of one become common to all", but the rhetorician has to "abandon" himself to "the expression of enthusiasm in order to bring forth this sentiment in others" (De la littérature 406). Corinne basically states that during her inspirational eloquence, she utters truths in her enthusiasm, which are not to be separated from virtue, which is an inner disposition not to be interpreted as mere morality. The author argues that "if we persist in believing that eloquence is dangerous, we should be aware of what we have to do to suffocate it, and we will see that eloquence is like enlightenment, liberty, and all the great developments of the human spirit" (De la littérature 406).[40] Madame de Staël links eloquence with liberty at a time when Napoleon Bonaparte was stifling liberty of expression.[41] Thus, the author may have created an Improvisatrice in order to represent these qualities of liberty and eloquence.

In addition to morality, an essential characteristic that defines improvisation is enthusiasm. Corinne's improvisation may be contrasted with the religious orator who is

[39] Corinne refers to the interest she is inspired with in conversation with others.
[40] The author was respected for her ideas on liberty; in The Monthly Review, a critic writes: "It was she who made *liberalism* the substitute for *chivalry*" (p. 253 vol. 92 1819-1820).
[41] Balayé writes, "La liberté d'expression proclamée en 1798 n'est pas respectée, encore moins sous le consulat et l'Empire : il suffit à Napoléon d'un ordre pour que De l'Allemagne soit supprimé et son auteur réduit au silence avec l'interdiction non écrite mais parfaitement claire de ne rien publier ni en France ni dans les pays sous la domination française, soit presque toute l'Europe" (Madame de Staël : Écrire, lutter, vivre 18-19).

described when Oswald visits Italian churches during the Holy Week in Rome. The narrator says:

> Une pensée nouvelle causerait presque une sorte de rumeur dans ces esprits tellement ardents et paresseux tout à la fois, qu'ils ont besoin de l'uniformité pour se calmer, et qu'ils l'aiment parce qu'elle les repose. Il y a dans les sermons une sorte d'étiquette pour les idées et les phrases. Les unes viennent presque toujours à la suite des autres ; et cet ordre serait dérangé si l'orateur, parlant d'après lui-même, cherchait dans son âme ce qu'il faut dire. (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 260)

Like most rhetoricians the preacher follows a usual pattern and order of ideas, but unlike the Improvisatrice's ideology, his speech is hollow because there is no newness of ideas, and he fails to look into his "âme" to discover authenticity that springs from enthusiasm.[42] Frank Paul Bowman defines Madame de Staël's notion of enthusiasm as: "faculté pneumatique liant le religieux et l'esthétique, et permettant la transcendance de notre misérable condition humaine"(146). The word "pneumatique", used by Bowman in this quotation, is derived from the Greek word '*pneumatikos*', which links it to the word '*pneuma*', meaning, according to the Oxford Dictionary of English, "the vital spirit, soul, or creative force of a person". Drawing from Bowman's definition, enthusiasm would be linked with '*pneuma*'—or the soul.[43] In her exposition on Kant, the author says that "all men admire what is beautiful either

[42] In The Birth of European Romanticism: Truth and Propaganda in Staël's *De L'Allemagne*, 1810-1813, John Clairbone Isbell has a discussion of Madame de Staël's notion of "âme". He writes, Staël's *âme* has four main sets of attributes, drawn from four separate traditions: artistic creation, an eighteenth century concept; love and sentiment, again a modern flavour; and two ancient themes, religion and military valour" (198).

[43] In a scene during Good Friday when describing the music in *Miserere*, the narrator refers to death as if: "tout à coup un ange venait enlever sur ses ailes le sentiment et la pensée, étincelles divines qui retourneraient à leur source"(Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 266). Balayé notes, "L'art devient la manifestation de Dieu sur la terre, un

in art or in nature because they have in their 'âmes' sentiments of celestial origin that beauty wakes" (De l'Allemagne Vol. II 137). For Madame de Staël, the concept of "âme" is an essential attribute that adds depth and transcendence[44] to the orator's eloquence and distinguishes it from mere repetition of usual speech patterns. Guellec points out that, for Madame de Staël, "there is a spiritual vocation in all art" (84).[45] In more general terms, it can thus be said that Corinne's improvisations are authentic because they stem from her soul and are an expression of an enthusiasm for both the aesthetic and the divine.

Corinne stresses the intrinsic value of art as being necessary to the imagination; she thus displays an anti-utilitarian view about art.[46] Indeed, Corinne exclaims, "Oh! que j'aime l'inutile" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 273). Balayé explains that Corinne "believes in the necessary liberty of the artist and of the writer" (Écrire, lutter, vivre 111). She notes that "for Corinne, who is poet and artist, the fine arts maintain the souls in the high spheres of the imagination and of enthusiasm; love is nourished by the contemplation of the beautiful that contributes to the feeling of the infinite, and the grandeur of the divine" (Lumière et Liberté 141). Balayé writes:

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moyen de communiquer avec lui, une prière exaucée" (23). On the other hand, Angelica Gooden argues that the *Miserere* marks the "theme of renunciation" in the novel (72 Delphine and Corinne).

[44] Lokke characterizes Corinne's art as "Transcendence of personal identity" (40). Corinne says that "she is poet when she performs not for personal sentiments, not for her own cause but for the dignity of humanity and the glory of the world" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 85).Thus, Corinne's improvisation "speaks in the interests and the name of the people rather than consisting merely of personal feeling. Corinne then feels a supernatural enthusiasm, and she feels that what talks in her is better than her" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 85). She feels "poet when her soul is elevated and scorns egoism and lowliness" (Corinne 85). She "feels enthusiasm when she has a shaking that is the source of ideal beauty in the arts, of religion of solitary souls, of generosity in heroes, of disinterestedness in men" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 85-86). These sentiments expressed by Corinne do bring enthusiasm to its original meaning, being possessed by a God (as elucidadated by Madame de Staël in her definition of enthusiasm on p. 301 of De l'Allemagne II).

[45] My translation. Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent translations of Guellec's article are my own.

[46] Vincent argues that economic theorists, such as Adam Smith in his Wealth of Nations, emphasized "self-interest" rather than "benevolence or the anti-utilitarian ethos of moral sympathy" as bringing about progress. (24).

> ce qu'elle dit de la musique et de l'architecture marque qu'elle les détache de la notion d'utilité qui, sur le plan religieux et moral, est chère à Oswald, pour ne plus penser qu'à la beauté pour elle-même, pure, gratuite. Corinne peut comprendre et même partager le point de vue d'Oswald, elle n'en reste pas moins le défenseur de l'art pour l'art, ce qui constitue entre eux une divergence qui s'ajoute à bien d'autre. ("Fonction Romanesque de la musique" 22)

Despite being a defender of the idea of 'art for art's sake', "Corinne, nevertheless, attempts the difficult conciliation of utilitarian and non-utilitarian notions" (Écrire, lutter, vivre 111).[47] Similarly, Vincent argues, "Germaine's de Staël's politics of the feminine, a liberal, anti-utilitarian ethos or culture grounded in the development of 'feminine' passions such as sympathy and aimed at furthering the Enlightenment ideal of perfectibility" (9). During her first improvisation, Corinne exclaims, "Ce n'est pas seulement de pampres et d'épis que notre nature est parée, mais elle prodigue sous les pas de l'homme, comme à la fête d'un souverain, une abondance de fleurs et de plantes inutiles qui, destinées à plaire, ne s'abaissent point à servir" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 64). In this passage, the uselessness and beauty of the flowers refer to the idea of 'art for art's sake', a non-utilitarian point of view. Later in her improvisation when she refers to Matthew's gospel, the lilies reinforce this idea of art as having a non-utilitarian value not only through the implied divine protection but also though the beauty of the flowers.[48] Seth maintains that this constitutes a first warning that Corinne "ne doit pas 's'abaisser à servir', prostituer sa muse à une esthétique qui n'est point sienne, ni se

[47] Balayé writes: "Là où l'on a cru voir des contradictions et des incohérences, il vaudrait mieux, par example, examiner le jeu complexe des idées de l'héroïne, assez riche pour la rendre capable de comprendre l'homme qu'elle aime. Alors qu'Oswald est entier dans toutes ses opinions, Corinne porte en elle une ambivalence qui lui permet de comprendre l'autre » (Écrire, lutter, vivre note 1, 111-112).

[48] Corinne says, "Les lis ne travaillent ni ne filent, et cependant quels vêtements des rois pourraient égaler la magnificence dont j'ai revêtu ces fleurs" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 66)

détourner de Dieu" ("'À sa voix, tout sur la terre se change en poésie'" 141). Indeed, in the course of the novel, through her attempt to please Oswald, Corinne loses her ability to create. Seth argues that under Oswald's influence her divine gift, her ability to create, becomes fragile:

> Son équilibre est compromis et donc son génie. Elle ne peut l'adapter car c'est un don divin, celui d'opérer une transmutation entre ce qu'elle ressent et ce qui l'entoure, de traduire ce que chacun d'entre nous ne peut que percevoir indistinctement. Par ce don, elle est porte-voix de la parole divine et ses improvisations transcendent l'humain. ("'À sa voix, tout sur la terre se change en poésie'" 143).

Oswald's utilitarian view of art and of life stifles Corinne's gift; as a result, her enthusiasm that acts as a bridge between the material and the transcendental is suppressed. Thus, the improvisatrice espouses anti-utilitarian aesthetics; she however undermines her own "âme" to win Oswald's approval.

The Improvisatrice may be characterized as a figure with a great capability to be transported by enthusiasm. The profoundness of her enthusiasm, during her improvisation, renders her worthy to be, like Sappho, an inspired priestess that momentarily brings to her audience such elated feelings that bring the heavenly down to the earthly. In a definition of enthusiasm, the author writes:

> l'enthousiasme se rallie à l'harmonie universelle: c'est l'amour du beau, l'élévation de l'âme, la jouissance du dévouement, réunis dans un même sentiment qui a de la grandeur et du calme. Le sens de ce mot chez les Grecs en

> est la plus noble définition: l'enthousiasme signifie Dieu en nous. (De l"Allemagne II 301)[49]

In her explanation of enthusiasm, Madame de Staël uses words such as beautiful, divine, elevated, devoted, grandeur, and calm, which are related to the spirit of Romantic thought. Anne Amend, explains, "Du point de vue psychologique et physiologique, l'enthousiasme s'avère être une forme de l'énergie humaine…C'est un dynamisme qui porte l'individu à l'action, le pousse à mener une vie intense et expansive" ("Le système de l'enthousiasme d'après Madame de Staël" 270-271). This intensiveness and expansiveness that originates from Corinne's enthusiasm finds expression in her improvisations. Thus, the author's understanding of enthusiasm[50] seems to be integral to what constitutes the Improvisatrice's identity.

Although the Improvisatrice can be understood, like the prophet, to be 'possessed' during her intense enthusiasm, she should not be interpreted as being outside reason. In order to understand Corinne's experience of feeling 'possessed' with inspiration, it is worthy to turn to Plato's understanding of what it means for the poet to be beside himself. As Anne Amend points out, Plato is the first to sketch a theory of enthusiasm ("Le système de l'enthousiasme d'après Madame de Staël" 271). Indeed, in Plato's "Ion", Socrates says, "for the epic poets, all the good ones, have their excellence, not from art, but are inspired, possessed...for a poet is a

[49] In reference to Madame de Staël's definition, Marie-Claire Vallois explains that when applied to creative prose literature, this statement becomes "unorthodox" because "the god of enthusiastic writing shows itself to be a woman" ("Old Idols, New Subject" 96). Whereas genius was a title reserved for men, creative enthusiasm, in this case, stems from a woman.

[50] However, Madame de Staël clearly states that enthusiasm should not be confused with fanaticism, which she equates with single-mindedness; in contrast, enthusiasm is harmonious in the sense that it expands the imagination and the thought processes (De L'Allemagne II 301 & 306). She states that "fanaticism in religion or in politics resulted in terrible excesses, by shaking congregations through incendiary speeches, but it was faulty reasoning, and not the movement of the soul, that rendered these speeches fatal" (De la littérature 404).

light and winged thing, and holy, and never able to compose until he has become inspired, and is beside himself, and reason is no longer in him" (220). Similarly to Plato's definition of a poet being divinely possessed as expressed in "Ion", Gayle A. Levy argues, "The female sibyl does not appear to create of her own volition; instead an external force animates her, God speaks through her. And like Virgil's Sibyl, Corinne seems to be possessed—her persona appears to change when her genius subsumes her" (248). However, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, enthusiasm was seen rather negatively. For instance, David Hume maintained that under the influence of enthusiasm, an individual could feel "raptures, transports, and surprising flights of fancy"; hence, this enthusiastic individual would mistakenly believe that he was guided by divinity (74). Hume writes, "Hope, pride, presumption, a warm imagination, together with ignorance, are, therefore, the true sources of enthusiasm" (74). Similarly, in The Gentleman's Magazine, enthusiasm is considered to be contrary to the Enlightenment's ideals; it is referred as, "Illumination without search; of certainty without proof, and without examination" and as "the ungrounded fancies of a Man's own brain" (Vol. 9 Oct. 1739 527). Indeed, during the Enlightenment period, enthusiasm is the "the other of reason" (Ted Honderich 255). However, for artist and writers of the Romantic period, enthusiasm became a way to readmit emotion and to resist the emphasis on reason of eighteenth century philosophy. Alan Gregory explains, "Enthusiasm and Romanticism converge in resisting the reductions of Enlightenment rationality" (112).[51] In other words, the Enthusiasts, the Romantics as well as the sentimental and Gothic writers were convinced that

[51] The original meaning of the word enthusiasm meant being possessed by a God. According to Gregory, enthusiasts were viewed negatively by philosophers of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. John Locke denounced enthusiasm for "abandoning reason 'for the ungrounded fancies of a man's own brain'" (Gregory 102). Methodist John Wesley considered enthusiasm to be "a form of 'religious madness'", although Wesley himself was thought to be an enthusiast (Gregory 102). Gregory explains that "Enthusiasm involved breaching limits, stirring fears of lawlessness, madness insurrection, and revolution" (102).

"feeling"—"possessed moral and spiritual power" (Gregory 110). Similarly, Madame de Staël argues that "this sentiment is very favorable to the imagination" (De l"Allemagne II 306). She maintains that "showing disdain for exalted sentiments"[52] in favor of reason causes the spirit to become devoid of the imagination (De l"Allemagne II 308). Enthusiasm is expansive because it admits emotion and the imagination as opposed to reason. Corinne says, "Quand une fois on a tourné l'enthousiasme en ridicule, on a tout défait, excepté l'argent et le pouvoir" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 99). Enthusiasm allows for benevolent emotions that are not guided by self-interest. Nanette Le Coat argues:

> Staël was skeptical about nascent positivism not in the name of a return to metaphysical or theological modes of thinking, but rather, on epistemological grounds. She boldly asserted that memory and imagination are forms of knowing that supplement and even exceed reason and observation. (152)

For instance, it is not through reason but through an imaginative sympathy that Corinne understands Oswald's feelings when he is among the audience during her first improvisation. Although the author places a strong emphasis on the imagination, enthusiasm for Madame de Staël does not exclude reason. Indeed, Prince Castel-Forte, in the novel, says that Corinne has both the capacity for enthusiasm and of analysis (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 82).[53] Even though Madame de Staël is considered to be one of the key figures having played a role in the birth of Romanticism, she is also committed to ideas introduced in the Enlightenment period. Balayé argues that Madame de Staël's thinking introduced a continuity between the ideas of the Enlightenment and Romantic movements (Écrire, lutter, vivre 292). She maintains that because Madame de Staël is "profoundly opposed to all rupture, she is a being of continuity;

[52] "sentiments exaltés" is synonymous with enthusiasm.
[53] "une personne à la fois susceptible d'enthousiasme et d'analyse" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 82).

for Madame de Staël perfectibilty is an evolution, a slow uninterrupted movement, and not a revolution, a brutal movement, a rupture" (Écrire, lutter, vivre 306). Thus, the Improvisatrice represents a continuity, not a rupture, between the Enlightenment period and Romanticism because her eloquence expresses enthusiasm, which embodies both reason and imagination.

For Madame de Staël, regulating emotion is not the best path towards creativity. Mee explains that "transport out of the self" was associated with poetry, and that the aesthetics of the eighteenth-century were concerned with regulating this "transport" (54). Wordsworth stresses the regulation of emotion in his famous statement "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility" ("Preface to Lyrical Ballads" 886) (Mee 76). In relation to this idea of regulating emotion,[54] Madame de Staël, in her discussion of Goethe, explains that for Goethe "an author must maintain tranquility when composing a passionate text" (De l'Allemagne I 190). However, Madame de Staël bewails the fact that Goethe is adopting this position in relation to his creativity by pointing out to the fact that the earlier Goethe did not hold this point of view (De l'Allemagne I 190). She suggests that the younger Goethe was "possessed of his genius rather than being the master of it" (De l'Allemagne I 190). This idea relates to the fact that Madame de Staël argues that "the poet is inferior to the inspiration that animates him, and that the creative writer who judges his creative force[55] risks losing it" (De l'Allemagne I 191). She thinks that the sublime and the divine were felt momentarily in his heart" (De l'Allemagne I 190-191). Similarly, Corinne says that when she improvises the creative force that is "talking to me is greater than me", and

[54] as elucidated by Mee

[55] In Madame de Staël, Novelist: The Emergence of the Artist As Woman, Madelyn Guthwirth, commenting on Madame de Staël's notion of creativity, states "She sought to move woman via the immanent to the transcendent realm and to lay claim to a place for her there" (301). In relation to this idea of creativity, Lokke inquires into Madame de Staël's notions of female genius, transcendence, and creativity (Tracing Women's Romanticism 25). She gathers that the best manner to trace Madame de Staël's philosophy of female creativity is to outline her conception of 'enthusiasm' in her theoretical works (Tracing Women's Romanticism 25).

that she feels a "supernatural enthusiasm" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 85).[56] There is no attempt to control her enthusiasm when she is in a state of inspiration; in fact, Corinne's enthusiasm allows for a greater creativity. Thus, Madame de Staël suggests that when a poet attempts to regulate his emotion, he loses his creative force.

The Improvisatrice's enthusiasm is an inspired spiritual state that is not divorced from the physical. In the seventeenth century, Enlightenment thinkers considered that religious enthusiasts misidentified religious inspiration with the "excitements of the body", such as "shaking" and "quaking" (Mee 12). In The Gentleman's Magazine, the enthusiast's visions are seen "as raptures, he mistakes for heavenly, while they are in reality sensual chimeras" (Vol. 8 Mar. 1738 138). In the novel, spiritual and bodily sensations are interlinked and are expressed by Corinne when she says, "Vous le voyez, je ne puis approcher d'aucun des sujets qui me touchent sans éprouver cette sorte d'ébranlement qui est la source de la beauté idéale dans les arts, de la religion dans les âmes solitaires, de la générosité dans les héros, du désintéressement parmi les hommes" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 85-86). By using the word "ébranlement", Corinne's enthusiasm expresses the spiritual through the physical in her philosophical aesthetics. In fact, the interconnection of the physical and the spiritual is obvious when Corinne's body turns ill when she loses the enthusiasm that inhabited her.

The Improvisatrice's enthusiasm is a channel towards divine inspiration, which constitutes her poetic genius. Corinne is compared to a priestess who is a genius, a poet, and a creator of fine arts because of her great gift for enthusiasm: "l'enthousiasme l'emportait sur la timidité. Ce n'était plus une femme craintive, mais une prêtresse[57] inspirée qui se consacrait

[56]Corinne says, "Je crois éprouver alors un enthousiasme surnaturel, et je sens bien que ce qui parle en moi vaut mieux que moi-même" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 85).
[57] In Sapho, Sapho is also referred as a priestess, more precisely as Apollo's priestess (508)

avec joie au culte du génie" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 68). Moreover, the author maintains that enthusiasm gives access to the divine; she holds that "enthusiasm is the incense that links the earth to heaven" (De l'Allemagne I 205). Madame de Staël links Corinne's poetic genius to the transcendental when she describes her as having an expression of "divine inspiration" in her eyes (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 81). In addition, Esterhammer argues, "The discourse of improvisation…intersects in important ways with the Romantic image of the natural poetic genius" ("The Improviser's Disorder" 330). Thus, enthusiasm, divine inspiration, and poetic genius are all elements that intersect when depicting Corinne's improvisation.

Natural landscape is a factor that determines Corinne's enthusiasm and contributes to her equation of the sensual with the spiritual. When Corinne was in England, she hesitated to return back to Italy, despite her nostalgia, because first of public opinion, and then because of the ordinary order of things. When she hears a group of Italian travelers singing under her window, the enthusiasm that the Italian melody awakes in her helps her to elevate herself above the monotony of the small town in English society, which held her back, and to take flight toward the fulfillment of her artistic genius:

> J'étais dans une sorte d'ivresse, je sentais pour l'Italie tout ce que l'amour fait éprouver, désir, enthousiasme, regrets ; je n'étais plus maîtresse de moi-même, toute mon âme était entraînée vers ma patrie : j'avais besoin de la voir, de la respirer, de l'entendre, chaque battement de mon cœur était un appel à mon beau séjour, à ma riante contrée ! Si la vie était offerte aux morts dans les tombeaux, ils ne soulèveraient pas la pierre qui les couvre avec plus d'impatience que je n'en éprouvais pour écarter de moi tous les linceuls, et

reprendre possession de mon imagination, de mon génie, de la nature !

(Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 384-385)

Balayé notes, "sa nostalgie d'exilée fait place à un entraînement irrésistible" ("Fonction romanesque de la musique" 28). Her nostalgia is triggered by the visual, olfactory, and auditory senses. Furthermore, Terracine, where Corinne and Oswald walk together, is described by the narrator as a Garden of Eden[58] where nature is a feast for the senses that celebrates their love and where the evocation of perfumes from flowers and fruits and birdsongs suggest that the sensual is not divorced from the spiritual, and provides an opening for the imagination.[59] Similarly, Michel Delon argues, "Ses parfums ne pourraient n'être qu'incitation à l'amour, provocation à la sensualité, ivresse physique. La comparaison avec la musique mélodieuse rétablit une spiritualité. L'ivresse est moins orgiaque que poétique, moins appel au plaisir physique qu'à la création artistique" (129). The richness and beauty of the landscape stimulates the senses, which act upon the spiritual by stimulating creativity. Furthermore, nature's appeal to the senses in the Italian landscape is linked to enthusiasm. Corinne refers to England's natural landscape as "horreur poétique". She laments the fact that in comparison to her native land, "England's sky is always full of mist, the fruits do not ripe and that there were no vines" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 378). Most importantly, she relates how the "flowers grew languidly" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 378). The weakness of the flowers in England's countryside reflects how England's landscape fails to inspire Corinne

[58] Vallois explains that "this paradise is impossible for the heroes who cannot live a happiness that the whole Western civilization condemns through the central dogma of the original sin and the fall of man…the heroes see themselves forced to leave this terrestrial paradise to return to the reality of human suffering" (Fictions Féminines 123). (My translation)

[59] The narrator, says, "Corinne et lord Nelvil se promenèrent lentement et avec délices dans la campagne. Chaque pas, en pressant les fleurs, faisait sortir les parfums de leur sein. Les rossignols venaient se reposer plus volontiers sur les arbustes qui portaient les roses. Ainsi les chants les plus purs se réunissaient aux odeurs les plus suaves" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 287).

with enthusiasm. Indeed, Corinne clearly specifies how the climate in England contributed to her unhappiness. By offering access to the sensual, the natural landscape in Italy provides an avenue for the Improvisatrice's creative enthusiasm.

While Oswald insists on an austere form of religious and philosophical understanding of the world, Corinne embraces an aesthetics defined by the beautiful that is inclusive of both the spiritual and the physical. Witnessing Corinne's admiration for the arts in Rome, Oswald expresses ethics of morality and sacrifice: "il cherchait par-tout un sentiment moral, et toute la magie des arts ne pouvait jamais lui suffire" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 116). Oswald says:

> un sacrifice quel qu'il soit, et plus beau, plus difficile, que tous les élans de l'âme et de la pensée. L'imagination exaltée peut produire les miracles du génie ; mais ce n'est qu'en se dévouant à son opinion, ou à ses sentiment, qu'on est vraiment vertueux. (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 116)

In view of Oswald's statement, Corinne shudders at the idea that Oswald "could immolate himself and others for public opinion" ("culte des opinions")[60] (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 116). Lokke argues that Oswald "advocates a violence of repression" (Tracing Women's Romanticism 43). Oswald's notions of sacrifice and morality taint his view of life with melancholy and austerity. In contrast, Corinne emphasizes that the beauty found in nature should be cherished since it is threatened by the transience of life: "l'âge, les infirmités, la mort tariront bientôt cette goutte de rosée qui tombe du ciel, et ne se repose que sur les fleurs" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 273). Her understanding of the transcendental encompasses religion, art, beauty, sensuality, benevolence, love, and nature. She says, "Cher Oswald, laissez-nous tout confondre, amour, religion, génie, et le soleil et les parfums, et la musique et

[60] In Delphine, public opinion is also what alienates Léonce from Delphine. The influence of public opinion on characters is a recurrent theme in Madame de Staël's fictional.writings; in particular, it is found in Delphine.

la poésie ; il n'y a d'athéisme que dans la froideur, l'égoïsme et la bassesse" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 273).[61] Lokke explains, "the heart of Corinne's creed, eloquently expressed, is a union of the sensuous and the spiritual, a coexistence of rather than a battle between the earthly and the divine" (Tracing Women's Romanticism 44). In sum, Corinne's philosophy is an affirmation of life while Oswald's viewpoint is based on sacrifice, which leads him to constant self-inflicted punishment.

Moreover, Oswald's sense of duty towards patriarchal law leads him to have sentiments of ambivalence[62] towards Corinne, which results in her downfall. Oswald chastises Corinne's celebration of life by stressing the necessity of duty, sacrifice, and struggle. Lokke argues that for Corinne religion and art are rooted "beyond morality"; that is, she "separates morality from religion" (Tracing Women's Romanticism 43). Corinne's spirituality includes beauty and the sensual. When Corinne runs to Oswald's house after she hears that his chest wound has been re-opened, she, as an unmarried woman, commits a fault, according to English customs, by going alone into a man's house. For this mistake that she carried out for him, Oswald wishes that the conflict that he feels within himself between his feelings for Corinne and his reverence to the voice of his father might be resolved by the necessity to marry Corinne as a duty to her for having trespassed patriarchal law (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985,

[61] Also quoted by Lokke p. 44 Tracing Women's Romanticism.

[62] Oswald's ambivalence towards Corinne is an indication that he is caught in the debate of proper womanhood set against the position of the female artist in society. Oswald maintains patriarchal definitions of gender roles by arguing that men should have precedence over women. He reasons that in Italy:

> les hommes n'inspirent aucun genre de respect aux femmes; elles ne leur savent aucun gré de leur soumission, parcequ'ils n'ont aucune fermeté de caractère, aucune occupation sérieuse de la vie. Il faut, pour que la nature et l'ordre social se montrent dans toute leur beauté, que l'homme soit protecteur et la femme protégée. . .Ici l'on dirait, presque, que les femmes sont le sultan et les hommes le sérail. (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 157)

Thus, Oswald's male dominant view of society is an example of how his voice is part of patriarchal discourses. As opposed to his father, however, Oswald's views, on the subordination of women, are not rigid. Despite his patriarchal stance, he is moved by Corinne's reflections on the unjust restrictions imposed upon the female artist. Therefore, his views on the woman question are torn between his esteem for Corinne and his patriarchal upbringing.

206-207). When she tells him that "by her age and her talents, she has in Rome the liberty of a married woman", he falls into despair because he needs to feel Corinne's dependence on him in order to realize what he perceives to be his duty towards her (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 207).[63] Thus, Oswald's actions are governed by a sense of duty to patriarchal ideals. He says:

> L'enthousiasme poétique qui vous donne tant de charmes, n'est pas j'ose le dire, la dévotion la plus salutaire. Corinne, comment pourrait-on se préparer par cette disposition aux sacrifices sans nombre qu'exige de nous le devoir ?…le sentiment peut être notre récompense, mais il ne doit pas être notre seul guide : vous décrivez l'existence des bienheureux, et non pas celle des mortels. La vie religieuse est un combat, et non pas un hymne. (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 274)[64]

Feeling is part of Corinne's imaginative enthusiasm, whereas, for Oswald, feeling is secondary to duty. Margaret Cohen argues that Oswald's emotional involvement with Corinne results in feelings of repentance towards his father whom he feels he is disobeying through his attachment with a woman that he knows his father would disapprove (106). This sense of wrongness, Cohen maintains, thwarts him from succeeding to the role of the Father and leaves him crippled at the level of the "(erring) son" (106). According to Cohen, this situation that stems from Oswald's feelings "'undermine(s) rather than strengthen(s) the paternal line'" (106).[65] Despite the fact that Oswald chooses to follow the dictates of duty and marries

[63] John Playfair, writing in the Edinburgh Review, condemns Oswald for abandoning Corinne. He argues that after spending so much time in Corinne's company, his duty should had been to marry her: "The fear of impropriety might have been consulted, when the mutual attachment of Corinne was in its commencement" (94 Edinburgh Review 11 1807 194). Oswald's is criticized for his failure to take action and his irresolution towards Corinne (Ibid).
[64] Also quoted by Lokke p. 43 in Tracing Women's Romanticism.
[65] Cohen is quoting from Margaret Waller's The Male Malady: Fictions of Impotence in the French Romantic Novel. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993.

according to his father wishes, Corinne's influence causes him to regret that the happiness that he longs for cannot be fulfilled within the rigid English patriarchal gender roles. This conflict between abiding to a sense of duty versus expressing an imaginative enthusiasm can be explained by the cultural differences expressed in the novel between England and Italy. Doris Y. Kadish maintains that, in the novel, England represents "an aristocratic commitment to the past, family lines, and property", whereas Italy manifests the ideals of the early stages of the Revolution such as "freedom" and "liberation from oppressive traditions" (117). The liberal notions of gender expectations in Italy and Corinne's independence as a woman artist suggest freedom from oppressive patriarchal roles. Lokke explains, "For Oswald, violence, sacrifice, and guilt are the essence of religion and spirituality. He accepts the definition—political and potentially militaristic—of religion bequeathed to him by his father" (Tracing Women's Romanticism 43). Indeed, Oswald stresses the military to form a man's character, and he disapprovingly observes that Italian men possess feminine virtues such as softness[66] (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 157). Drawing from Lokke's argument[67], Vincent comments, "Corinne's internalization of patriarchal values destroys her capacity for enthusiasm, and leads to her virtual suicide" (17). Vincent explains that Corinne's powerlessness in face of Oswald's melancholia implies her resignation to patriarchal ideals, which effectively leads her to her silencing (17). In face of Oswald's stern view of life, Corinne's genius fades within a patriarchy that is intolerant towards unconventional feminine expression. In more general

[66] Oswald says, "Les hommes ont la douceur et la souplesse du caractère des femmes…Et en effet, dans un pays où il n'y a ni carrière militaire, ni institution libre, comment un homme pourrait-il se former à la dignité et à la force ? " (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 157).

[67] Lokke writes, "Corinne derives its psychological power from an unrelenting depiction of its heroine's self-destructive internalization of the patriarchal values and modes of thinking and feeling represented by Oswald and the deceased father who haunts his conscience: obsession with duty, propriety, and violence to feelings and desires" ("Sybilline Leaves" 167).

terms, it can be said that this conflict between Oswald and Corinne expresses the battle between reason and enthusiasm.

Although Corinne upholds aesthetics of disinterestedness and spontaneity, she undermines her own security by loving Oswald according to her ideals. For Madame de Staël, spontaneity is linked with virtue since the character that is true does not to premeditate acts of goodness on the basis of duty. She writes:

> Celui qui n'a jamais besoin de consulter ses devoirs, parce qu'il peut se fier à tous ses mouvements ; celui qu'on pourrait trouver, pour ainsi dire, une créature moins rationnelle, tant il paraît agir involontairement et comme forcé par sa nature ; celui qui exerce toutes les vertus véritables, sans se les être nommées d'avance, et se prise d'autant moins, que, ne faisant jamais d'effort, il n'a pas l'idée du triomphe, celui-là est l'homme vraiment vertueux. (De l'influence des passions 198-199)

Thus, the author suggests that true virtue goes beyond a mere compliance to duty and morality, to include a mixture of spontaneity and disinterestedness in feeling. By the fact that she becomes increasingly more selfless as she falls more deeply in love with Oswald, it can be maintained that she sees love as being unconditional. She maintains that love excludes self-interest: "Qu'est-ce donc que l'amour, quand il prévoit, quand il calcule le moment où il n'existera plus? S'il y a quelque chose de religieux dans ce sentiment, c'est parce qu'il fait disparaître tous les autres intérêts, et se complaît comme la dévotion dans le sacrifice entier de soi-même" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 278-279). Contrary to conventional notions which limited women from expressing their true feelings in the nineteenth century, Corinne espouses ideals of female artlessness when it comes to gender relations. This idea is dear to Madame de

Staël since even in her early attempts at fictional writing, there is this insistence on the female heroine loving without any recourse to artifice. For instance, in Mirza, the heroine says to Ximéo: "n'attends pas de moi l'art des femmes de ton pays" (Oeuvres Complètes 74). Although Corinne's disinterested devotion is admirable, she compromises her own power of independence, her reputation, and her respectability because there is a risk that society condemns her disinterested love as being unacceptable for an unmarried woman. Furthermore, Anthony H. Harrison explains that by the middle of the nineteenth century women "are understood to be 'clothed in moral beauty'—selfless, disinterested, and spiritually pure by 'nature'" (30). In other words, women's "moral beauty" would be associated with feminine virtues such as self-effacement and submissiveness endorsed by patriarchy for the sanctity of the domestic sphere. Thus Corinne's disinterested aesthetics are inadvertently connected to the gender traits that were considered as being feminine. Her ideals are destined to fail because she cannot escape her condition as a woman.

Corinne not only fails with Oswald in her attempt to convey to him the value of possessing imaginative enthusiasm but also becomes a victim of the male gaze. Madame de Staël's novel is partly a travel narrative[68] where we see Corinne acquainting the Italian arts to Oswald.[69] By doing so, Corinne tries to convert him to the importance of the imagination and of enthusiasm. Birkett argues, "Corinne urges Oswald away from an exclusive focus on isolated details (including, by implication, his father's death) towards the larger comprehension of an expanding, interrelated whole" (404). She wants to make him drop his

[68] Balayé explains that when Madame de Staël tried to understand the Italians to better explain them, she discovered that everyone believed that they knew them when in fact nobody really understood them (Les carnets de voyage de Madame de Staël 115). Through this travel narrative, Balayé maintains, "Elle fera donc pour l'Italie ce qu'elle se préparait déjà à faire pour l'Allemagne, elle la fera découvrir aux autres" (Les carnets de voyage de Madame de Staël 115).

[69] Balayé writes that Corinne plays the role of a mediator between Oswald and Italy (Lumière et Liberté 141).

prejudices against Italy and to make him see the value of the Italian arts, culture, and people. It is through Corinne's eyes that Oswald is able to be enchanted by Italy's arts and natural landscapes. The narrator says, "l'imagination, l'amour, l'enthousiasme, tout ce qu'il y a de divin dans l'âme de l'homme, lui parut réuni dans le projet enchanteur de voir Rome avec Corinne" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 92). Corinne is not only an enchantress, but is also a communicator of enthusiasm and of imagination. At the end of the narrative, however, when Oswald returns to Italy, he feels that Corinne's absence "désenchantait à ses yeux la nature et les arts" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 554). Gengembre argues that Corinne through her double nationality "builds a bridge"[70] between the two countries, Italy and England, and "makes of Corinne a pedagogue of beauty" ("Corinne, Roman Politique" 88). Through her teachings, she is also like a Scheherazade trying to postpone the inevitable, or the moment when Oswald will leave her.[71] She, however, ultimately fails because not only Oswald forsakes her, but as soon as he is back in England, he returns to his original rigid thinking: "les penchants, les habitudes, les goûts nés avec lui se réveillèrent avec plus de force que jamais" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 447). Birkett maintains that Oswald "cannot respond to her attempts to write a pluralist version of history that is a charter for other voices and values" (406). His first reaction upon his return is to notice the "order" and "industry" that exists in his country in comparison to the imagination which he associates with Italy (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 447). As opposed to his perception of Italian men and women, his views on gender roles are re-affirmed as he thinks that in England, men have "dignity" because they assert their superiority to the female gender,

[70] My translation. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent translations of Gengembre's article are mine.
[71] The narrator says, "Souvent même elle dirigeait à dessein son attention vers les objets extérieurs ; comme cette sultane des contes arabes qui cherchait à captiver, par mille récits divers, l'intérêt de celui qu'elle aimait, afin d'éloigner la décision de son sort jusqu'au moment où les charmes de son esprit rempotèrent la victoire" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 132-133).

and women occupy their proper position in society by being "modest"[72] (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 447). In contrast to the freedom of gender relations in Italy, he reflects that domesticity and morality is the fabric of English society (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 447). He considers that England represents "reason" as opposed to the "confusion, weakness, and ignorance" that is prevalent in Italy[73] (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 447). In Oswald's view, England (the North) is superior to Italy (the South), which is associated with the imagination or the feminine. In fact, he considers that by returning to England, "he was entering the existence that was suitable for men: action motivated by a goal" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 448). Guellec notes, "C'est en Angleterre seulement qu'Oswald retrouvera sa place, son rang, et peut-être sa virilité" (83).[74] By disparaging Italy, Oswald also depreciates Corinne, who is, as Guellec puts it, "le symbole et l'incarnation de l'Italie" (86). This is apparent by the fact that he abandons her. If the novel is to be read as a travelogue, then Corinne becomes an object of male gaze by being represented through the ruins of Italy. Marie-Claire Vallois explains, "Le détour de l'écriture touristique, ruse de la stratégie féminine, reviendrait-il à retomber dans le piège de la représentation phallocentrique où la femme ne peut s'inscrire que comme objet en ruines, objet mutilé ?" (Fictions Féminines 185). This male gaze is in a way exploiting her, destroying her, spoiling her beauty—Oswald's betrayal thus represents an invasion, a breach

[72] Beyond the concept of women's education advocated by the author, Simpson argues that the idea, presented by the text, of "cultural relativism", which delimits gender roles, gave women writers new imaginative means of expression (358). Simpson writes, "Corinne's gender theory insists on the importance of contingency and local convention. What the proper lady is, argues the novel, depends crucially on where she is. For many women, this cultural relativism provided an invaluable outlet for a creative imagination" (358).

[73] Glenda Sluga, argues, "Italy's anarchic political ambience—the lack of centralized government and social institutions which might shape public opinion—allows Corinne a space in the public sphere as a venerated woman (246).

[74] Vallois summarizes these ideas: "L'Italie et Corinne retiennent par l'imagination et les sens, domaine traditionnellement réservé aux femmes, alors qu'Oswald optera finalement pour les qualités plus viriles de la raison et de l'action. Il lui suffira de quitter l'Italie pour retrouver l'importance de ces valeurs" (Fictions Féminines 149).

of hospitality, which relates to the way Napoleon defeated Italy.[75] Joseph Luzzi argues that even though Oswald praises the superiority of England's morality and manly virtues over Italy's, he fails to "develop an individual code of honour" that would have protected Corinne from being broken-hearted in his hands (70). Luzzi states that this "individual code of honour", embraced by Castel-Forte who admonishes Oswald for his behavior towards Corinne, is "a particularly Italian way of considering law and morality" (70). Thus, Oswald's notion of the superiority of England over Italy functions as a parallel to Napoleon's imperialism with his Legal Code that failed to take into account local traditions. Similarly, Angelica Gooden argues that Corinne represents Italy's "non-conformity, feminism, and artistic greatness" (Delphine and Corinne 66). Moreover, the loss of her artistic talent "mirrors" the fate of Italy's loss of self-sufficiency (Gooden Delphine and Corinne 66). Gooden explains that, for Madame de Staël, Italy symbolizes, through its political subjugation and absence of democracy, women's situation (Delphine and Corinne 66). By reasserting his masculinity in Britain, he resists the feminization represented by Italy and by Corinne's Italian aesthetics and with her attempt to convert him.[76] Thus, it may be argued that Corinne and Oswald's relationship functions as an allegory for the way Napoleon conquered Italy.

In seventeenth and eighteenth century discourses, enthusiasm was often linked to madness. For instance, in The Gentleman's Magazine, enthusiasm is considered as an infection that could spread into the population;[77] it is also seen as a type of "madness"

[75] However, Caroline Franklin points out that Italy's colonizer was France, not England; In fact, England tried to defend Italy against French Invasion (Women Gender, and Enlightenment 559).
[76] As opposed to Italy's absence of centralized government, England's political situation represents a model of masculinity. Sluga writes, "For her (Madame de Staël), as for other nineteenth-century theorists who elaborated a racial pattern in regard to nations, some nations were more masculine that others, with 'masculinity' itself seen as a desirable national quality" (242).
[77] The Gentleman's Magazine Vol. 8 February 1738 Page 90.

emerging from an "excess of imagination".[78] The perceived madness of the enthusiast may also be compared with accounts of the improvisator. Esterhammer argues that "poetic improvisation" was often seen as "an unnatural activity of the mind and the body" manifested by "the great physical and neurological exertion" that it required ("The Improviser's Disorder" 331). The improvisator was also considered to have a "psychological make-up that was "suspect" and impulsive, to violate "normal social roles", and to display "anti-establishment behavior" (Esterhammer, "The Improviser's Disorder" 333 & 335). Moreover, the creative enthusiasm of the improvisator is interpreted as being driven by immediate gratification (Esterhammer "The Improviser's Disorder" 334). Thus, there are many parallels between enthusiasm and improvisation since they can both be linked to madness and unconventional behavior. Mee explains how enthusiasm was considered as "a cultural cure for a society becoming mechanistic and spiritually empty", but was also seen as potentially threatening to the integrity of the individual whose passions could become uncontrollable under the influence of enthusiasm (4). Related to the idea of enthusiasm and its influence on the passions, Madame de Staël explains, in the second preface to Lettres sur les écrits et le caractère de J. J. Rousseau, that "women of superior spirit are often of a passionate character" (Oeuvres Complètes de Madame de Staël Tome I 1). She argues that literary study is felicitous for women because it subdues the passions (Oeuvres Complètes de Madame de Staël Tome I 1). Thus, Madame de Staël maintains that study is efficient to control women's passions. If study tames the passions, it also offers women better opportunities to become aware of social injustices. In contrast to eighteenth-century British critics who view enthusiasm as dangerous for society, she points out that it is not "exaltation" that is threatening to humanity but

[78] The Gentleman's Magazine.Vol. 8 March 1738 page 148.

"coldness" and "egoism" (Oeuvres Complètes de Madame de Staël Tome I 1). Enthusiasm was met with disapproval in the classicist period, and although it was rehabilitated in the Romantic era, it was still being regulated (Mee 5). Thus, if the Improvisatrice embodies, communicates, and promotes enthusiasm, we can infer that during Napoleon's regime there was a need to regulate her since her knowledge added to her enthusiasm could spread and stir the population into rebellion.

Although some critics have regarded enthusiasm and melancholia as being mutually exclusive in the novel and as representing an allegory for a desire for freedom during the period of Napoeon's regime, other scholars believe that melancholia is inherent to enthusiasm, and that it is linked to religion. Lokke suggests that in general enthusiasm and melancholy are opposed in the novel, and "form a pair that is explicitly gendered" (Tracing Women's Romanticism 36). In other words, enthusiasm is embodied by Corinne in the novel whereas Oswald is unable to accept her aesthetics and remains fixated in his melancholia. Lokke argues that in opposition to the melancholy of Oswald, Corinne "incarnates this enthusiasm, its vulnerability as well as its emancipatory potential" during Napoleon's regime in Europe (Tracing Women's Romanticism 25). In fact, Lokke maintains that the conflict between the melancholy embodied in Oswald and the enthusiasm represented by Corinne is an "historical allegory for the contest over the political fate of post-Revolutionary, Napoleonic Europe" (Tracing Women's Romanticism 26). Freedom is necessary for the expansiveness of Corinne's enthusiasm, as opposed to Oswald's melancholia, which inclines him to have a fixated and intolerant point of view. On the other hand, Gengembre maintains that, for Madame de Staël, enthusiasm is linked to melancholia. He writes, "source of creation, positive passion, it is linked to inherent pain and to the human condition, and as a consequence to melancholia"

("L'enthousiasme dans Corinne ou l'Italie" 130). He makes a link between enthusiasm and religion by arguing that the sublime can be felt in an enthusiastic state but that this reminds the individual of the limitations of the human condition; as a result this melancholia gets transformed into feelings of the divine ("L'enthousiasme dans Corinne ou l'Italie" 132).[79] It is during the enthusiasm of her second improvisation that Corinne feels intensely the pain that awaits her in relation to her relationship with Oswald. It is her enthusiasm that allows her to become more sensitive to pain, and it, thus, that she recognizes Oswald's suffering during her first improvisation. In sum, enthusiasm can have both political and religious interpretations in the narrative.

It can be considered that the aesthetics of suffering need to be intermingled with the state of enthusiasm in order for the author to make a political statement about Italy's need for independence. Pouzoulet explains that the change of tone in the second part of Corinne's first improvisation exemplifies what she terms a "nouvelle italianité", where there is an "individual and collective opening towards melancholia" (210).[80] As Pouzoulet points out, Corinne loves Shakespeare because he is a poet that conveys the deepness of suffering (230). Pouzoulet maintains that the tragedy of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliette presented in the novel "confirms that if Corinne is to be regarded as a prophecy for Italy's political resurrection, it is not so much by the embodiment of her ideal qualities— that make only an ephemeral miracle in an Italy without liberty— but by this exemplary eloquence of the act of dying for love in the name of the ideal of enthusiasm that nourishes the poet as devotion does the hero" (231).Indeed, the sadness, Pouzoulet continues, of "Corinne's story aims to feed this

[79] Gengembre writes, "Le sublime confère à l'enthousiasme sa plénitude, mais en retour il renvoie l'individu aux limite de la condition humaine. Cette mélancolie se convertit en sentiment de l'infini et donne accès au divin. Voici donc le lien entre l'enthousiasme et la religion" ("Une mélodie intellectuelle" 132).
[80] My translation. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent translations of Pouzoulet's article are mine.

independence and this exaltation of the soul without which Madame de Staël is convinced that no willpower of nation can be accomplished" (231). Beyond enthusiasm, melancholy may be necessary to foster a nation's identity. Pouzoulet's argument is persuasive, but, as I will argue later in my chapter, I see Corinne's incurable melancholia that leads to her death as a form of political resistance against a dominant gender ideology.

Enthusiasm has a protective effect against conformity and against pain in the narrative, but it also has the capacity to expose the individual to intense contact with melancholia. At the end of the novel, the melancholy that afflicts Corinne is a symptom of her loss of imaginative enthusiasm—an inner resource and restorative function that constituted her creative genius and had the potential to imaginatively free her as an individual from the limitations imposed by reason and dogmatic thinking[81]. Anne Amend explains, "A l'enthousiasme est donc conféré le don de chasser la douleur. Cette force thérapeutique—prévenant ou étouffant les peines de l'âme—vient s'articuler à l'intérieur des domaines de la littérature, de l'étude, de la philosophie, et de la bienfaisance" ("Le système de l'enthousiasme d'après Madame de Staël" 275).[82] However, Gengembre slightly qualifies this idea by maintaining that while enthusiasm shields against pain, it also makes the individual more vulnerable to it. He argues, "Remède contre la douleur qu'il continue cependant de provoquer, l'enthousiasme exerce son pouvoir dans tous les domaines de la création" ("L'enthousiasme dans Corinne ou l'Italie" 131). Similarly, Amend further adds "Aussi la thérapeutique de l'enthousiasme relève-t-elle du

[81] Gengembre offers a different interpretation. He maintains that Corinne's last letter to Oswald conveys the idea that her enthusiasm remains unchanged ("L'enthousiasme dans Corinne ou l'Italie" 138). He writes, "By thinking of the above (of the heavenly) and of her Christian salvation, there is a return to the etymological meaning of the term enthusiasm" ("L'enthousiasme dans Corinne ou l'Italie" 138).

[82] However Amend qualifies this statement by saying "Aussi la thérapeutique de l'enthousiasme relève-t-elle du paradoxe : quoique l'enthousiasme puisse revêtir le rôle d'un remède efficace, il n'est pas dépourvu du danger de se métamorphoser en maladie, de s'affecter de tous les symptômes d'une mélancolie maladive » ("Le système de l'enthousiasme d'après Madame de Staël" 277).

paradoxe : quoique l'enthousiasme puisse revêtir le rôle d'un remède efficace, il n'est pas dépourvu du danger de se métamorphoser en maladie, de s'affecter de tous les symptômes d'une mélancolie maladive " ("Le système de l'enthousiasme d'après Madame de Staël" 277). A person endowed with imaginative enthusiasm has a sensitivity that inclines him towards melancholia. Indeed, during her second improvisation, Corinne exclaims, "Mais la prêtresse qui rendait les oracles, se sentait agitée par une puissance cruelle. Je ne sais quelle force involontaire précipite le génie dans le malheur : il entend le bruit des sphères que les organes mortels ne sont pas faits pour saisir" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 354). In the last chapter of my dissertation, I will discuss, in greater detail, how enthusiasm was interpreted as being caused by melancholia in seventeenth-century England. For now, it is useful to point out that there is no doubt that Madame de Staël sees Corinne's enthusiasm as being beneficial; nevertheless, traces of the disquisitions given by such writers as Henry More and John Locke about how enthusiasm is nothing more than unhealthy imagination may have had an impact on the depiction of Corinne's extreme despondency at the end of the novel. Despite the fact enthusiasm can act like a balm against pain, it also makes Corinne more susceptible to melancholia.

Corinne's monomania is an aspect of her melancholia, which causes her to lose her creative genius. The narrator says, "Si l'on peut deviner comment on arrive à la folie, c'est sûrement lorsqu'une seule pensée s'empare de l'esprit, et ne permet plus à la succession des objets de varier les idées" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 470). Guellec argues that "this type of obsession is closed from the enthusiasm, which is inseparable from being in communion and in sharing with others" (84). Guellec writes, "Mme de Staël refuse de conjuguer l'art et la folie, en n'accordant pas volontiers aux derniers écrits de Corinne la qualité du génie" (84). As

a matter of fact, Corinne isolates herself from society at the end of her life. Her enthusiasm no longer arises in conversation with others from which she produced her improvisations. Moreover, Lokke writes, "Monomania, obsession, and repetition compulsion replace inspiration" (Tracing Women's Romanticism 46). Corinne becomes preoccupied with her love for Oswald to such an extent that she ceases to concentrate on her artistic skills. As Guellec notes,[83] in De la littérature, Madame de Staël lamented the fact that since the Revolution, men had reduced women to mediocrity by not encouraging them to develop their intellectual faculties, and thus losing their capability to direct their children's education, and to influence morality in society (De la littérature 335-336). She says, "on ne pourrait jamais leur parler que d'amour, et cet amour n'aurait pas même la délicatesse qui peut tenir lieu de moralité" (De la littérature 336).[84] Indeed, Corinne's monomania may be interpreted as the author's way of saying that women become obsessed with Romantic love because society prevents them from fulfilling their intellectual capacities.

Although Madame de Staël postulates in her theoretical works that melancholia is linked with greater eloquence, the fact that it only leads Corinne to inarticulateness suggests that she may have associated melancholia with male genius, not female. In "Aspasie", she writes: "ce serait une belle en chose en effet que de réunir toute la magie de la culture poétique des Grecs avec la sévérité de la morale qui fortifie l'âme, et peut seule lui donner du sérieux et de la profondeur" (Œuvres complètes de Madame de Staël : Tome II 298). Although the author uses the word morality, it can be inferred that she also means that melancholy would add greater profundity to literary works since in the character of Oswald melancholy and morality are closely linked in Corinne. Despite the fact that Madame de Staël does state that

[83] Guellec, p. 83-84.
[84] Also quoted by Guellec, p. 83.

melancholia can add character to eloquence in De la littérature,[85] she depicts Corinne as losing her improvisational talent when she becomes melancholic. In contrast to famous male writers who produce masterpieces under the influence of melancholia, Corinne's melancholy, as Lokke argues, totally depletes her creative enthusiasm and inspiration (Tracing Women's Romanticism 47). Lokke explains how there is a general tendency to gender melancholia by characterizing it in men as a "prestigious pathos" whereas in women it is depreciated and identified as depression (Tracing Women's Romanticism 47).[86] She explains that melancholy is represented almost as a "contagious but prestigious disease" that Corinne contracts from Oswald (Tracing Women's Romanticism 47). She maintains that Corinne, and perhaps even Madame de Staël, succumb to the way "Romantic melancholy" is culturally seen as a representation of "aesthetic elitism" and "moral authority" (Tracing Women's Romanticism 47). Moreover, Lokke writes that there is a "submission to paternal authority at the heart of romantic melancholy" ("Sibylline Leaves" 158). Under the pressure of patriarchal law, Corinne succumbs to melancholia, but unlike male geniuses who produce more thought-provoking texts, Corinne becomes apathetic when she is in a state of dejection. However, melancholia may not be the only factor that precipitates Corinne's fall; instead, Corinne's profound regret for the loss of her artistic skills may be read as a suggestion that women should not suppress their personalities in order to please their partners when they enter romantic love relationships.

By being an Italian-English, Corinne developed both her capacity for enthusiasm and a tendency towards melancholia through her exposure to both cultures. In De la littérature,

[85] p.403
[86] Lokke notes that she draws this argument from Juliana Schiesari's The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.

Madame de Staël argues, "Les peuples du nord sont moins occupés des plaisirs que de la douleur" (206). Deriving from Madame de Staël's theory of associating the North with feelings of pain and the South with expressions of pleasure, Oswald's preoccupation with pain is due to his Northern temperament. On the other hand, Corinne, being both Italian and English, possesses, in light of Madame de Staël's theoretical statements, both the jovial and carefree attributes of the South[87] and the melancholia of the North. Balayé maintains that "Oswald is the symbol of the virtues of the English nation; the representative of an ideal political order" (Lumière et Liberté 137). Balayé writes "Oswald stands for discipline, tradition, and utility, whereas Corinne is synonym with liberty, art, and imagination" (Lumière et Liberté 137). She argues that Corinne "having grown up in two civilizations, having known two mentalities, she surpassed them both, to reunite in her the best of each; placed above the English and the Italians, she sees the truth which they do not see" (Écrire, lutter, vivre 201). Thus, Corinne has through her position as a woman and through her double nationality a hybridity that allows her to have a "double-consciousness"[88] of what it means to speak as an Italian to an Englishman and to inhabit as a woman a man's world.

Part of the process of Corinne's victimization is the disintegration of the self that occurs in her as she falls in love with Oswald. The first sign of this disintegration takes place soon after she is crowned for her artistic achievements at the Capitole. Madame de Staël writes, "Il la suivit; et, dans le moment où elle descendait l'escalier accompagnée de son cortège, elle fit un mouvement en arrière pour l'apercevoir encore : ce mouvement fit tomber sa couronne" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 68). Losing her crown in this scene, predicts how she

[87] Madame de Staël argues, "Les poètes du midi mêlent sans cesse l'image de la fraîcheur, des bois touffus, des ruisseaux limpides, à tous les sentiments de la vie. Ils ne se retracent pas même les jouissances du cœur, sans y mêler l'idée de l'ombre bienfaisante, qui doit les préserver des brûlantes ardeurs du soleil" (De la littérature 206).
[88] I am borrowing from W. E. B. Dubois's term in The Souls of Black Folk.

will experience a fall because, for Madame de Staël, an accomplished female artist cannot survive in an austere society that confines women within the domestic sphere. Later on in the narrative, when Oswald tells her that he has to leave Italy, Corinne faints and hurts her head due to the emotional shock and pain that she experiences. The narrator says :

> Mais quand Corinne revint à elle, elle aperçut dans une glace son visage pâle et défait, ses cheveux épars et teints de sang. —Oswald, dit-elle, Oswald, ce n'était pas ainsi que j'étais lorsque vous m'avez rencontrée au Capitole ; je portais sur mon front la couronne de l'espérance et de la gloire, maintenant il est souillé de sang et de poussière. (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 438)

In this passage, the image she sees of herself in the mirror illustrates the disintegration of her sense of integrated self. Corinne, who had known happiness and personal fulfillment in her artistic career, is now portrayed as a "female Christ", and her crown of success has now been replaced with a crown of thorns. Seth explains, "Elle n'a plus pour couronne que les stigmates de sa souffrance, images des plaies laissées sur le front du Christ par la couronne d'épines ; nous sommes loin de la prêtresse d'Apollon" ("La part des Anges" 184). Thus, the extreme suffering that Corinne experiences precipitates her fall, which leads to the disintegration of her sense of self.

The loss of Oswald's love causes Corinne to experience great pain, which in turn results in the decline of her creative genius. In fact, Corinne's fall from a position where she had enjoyed independence and the power of her creative mind over her audience, is even more pronounced because she had known the kind of respect and glory attributed to a priestess or a queen. Nancy K. Miller argues, "We may understand the fall from the height of art, from the triumph of Corinne's public, even national performance, to the depths of individual suffering

as Corinne's descent into the privatized spheres of femininity" (94). Tragically, Corinne loses her ability to create when Oswald leaves her and as she starts feeling more dependent on his love and acceptance. Corinne says, "Moi qui a besoin de mes talents, de mon esprit, de mon imagination pour soutenir l'éclat de la vie que j'ai adoptée, cela me fait mal, et beaucoup de mal, d'aimer comme je vous aime" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 145). Lokke writes, "Culturally sanctioned female suffering comes in the name of love rather than in the name of art and this passion removes rather then heightens genius in Corinne" (Tracing Women's Romanticism 48). Thus, Corinne succumbs to pain when she is unable to find a sense of self-fulfillment in her art and when she starts seeking patriarchal approval in the figure of her lover. Balayé argues that "suffering is derived from the abandonment of oneself to others who always have the possibility to desert us; Corinne and Delphine would be defeated for not having known to keep their liberty" (Lumière et Liberté 56). Balayé explains that "interior exile means not to find refuge nor reason to live in ourselves but to desire to find it outside of ourselves" (Lumière et Liberté 56). Thus, Madame de Staël seems to be saying that female autonomy is essential to the survival of the woman artist.

Corinne's victimization is also apparent when she feels that her sense of integrated self is fragmented. Corinne is aware of the loss of her creative genius in a piece she entitles "fragments des pensées de Corinne" where she ruminates, "Mon talent n'existe plus ; je le regrette" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 520). She stresses her regret for the way she has become indifferent towards her talent and admits her "profound discouragement" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 396).[89] Florence Lotterie argues, "La dissolution de sa personnalité créatrice se

[89] Corinne says, "Je me regrette et voilà tout. J'avais quelque orgueil de mon talent, j'aimais le succès, la gloire ; les suffrages même des indifférents étaient l'objet de mon ambition : mais à présent je ne me soucie de rien, et ce

manifeste dans le heurt d'une écriture discontinue" (111). As Lotterie argues, Corinne's consciousness of her fragmented sense of identity is manifested in a piece she herself entitles "fragments" and which displays the workings of her tormented mind. Gilbert and Gubar explain that women authors experience "uniquely female feelings of fragmentation, their own keen sense of the discrepancies between what they are and what they are supposed to be" (78). Similarly, Gooden asks the question: "Why do literary or artistic women break down?" (The Dangerous Exile 301). The explanation she offers to this question is that women authors suffer from an "anxiety of authorship" (The Dangerous Exile 300). In sum, the fragmentation, in Corinne's identity, occurs as she realizes that there is a disjuncture between societal expectations of a female gender role and her need for an artistic vocation.

As Corinne becomes conscious of the discrepancy that exists between who she is and what society expects her to be, she starts feeling inadequate and begins to compare herself to an idealized image of femininity constructed by patriarchy. Corinne develops a sense of inferiority as she starts comparing her image in the mirror to a 'superior' image instilled in her mind by patriarchy's definition of saintly womanhood. Madame de Staël states:

> D'abord elle avait l'idée de se parer avec soin, et de se montrer ensuite subitement à lui ; mais en commencement sa toilette, ses cheveux noirs, son teint un peu bruni par le soleil d'Italie, ses traits prononcés, mais dont elle ne pouvait pas juger l'expression en se regardant, lui inspirèrent du découragement sur ses charmes. Elle voyait toujours dans son miroir le visage aérien de sa sœur. (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 488)

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n'est pas le bonheur qui m'a détachée de ces vains plaisirs, c'est un profond découragement" (Corinne 3 Balayé ed. 1985, 96).

In this passage, when Corinne looks at herself, she sees Lucile who represents in her mind a superior and idealized image of femininity. Corinne compares this idealized image to her self-image. When she realizes that she does not meet the patriarchal model of the ideal woman, she gets discouraged. Thus, Madame de Staël suggests that deriving a sense of identity solely through romantic love notions results in a disempowered and disintegrated sense of self. Furthermore, a woman's value and her sense of self-worth in society is often related to how physically desirable she is perceived to be. Until she met Oswald, Corinne had escaped this fate by having an artistic purpose in her life. Her art had sustained her sense of self because it allowed her to be productive and to form an identity in a way that was not restricted to a female gender role and to romantic love notions. Corinne says, "Je suis poëte lorsque j'admire, lorsque je méprise, lorsque je hais, non par des sentiments personnels, non pour ma propre cause, mais pour la dignité de l'espèce humaine et la gloire humaine" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 85). Through her art, Corinne had felt that she was working for a greater cause and that she was serving humanity.

Corinne falls into silence as her pain increases and her creativity diminishes. Balayé explains that as the narrative progresses and Corinne feels the loss of her talent, music also disappears from the novel, and it is replaced by silence: "La musique, elle, disparaît, sauf pour de brefs et nostalgiques rappels. L'héroïne a perdu son pouvoir ; entraînée par l'homme néfaste auquel elle a attaché son sort, elle accède enfin au domaine du silence, d'où elle l'avait passagèrement arraché" ("Fonction romanesque de la musique" 29). This reflects how patriarchy would silence the sibyl, Corinne, whereas it would exalt the silent, modest, and self-effaced woman, Lucille—as represented in the novel by Corregio's Madonna. Thus, Oswald

would play a major role in her increasing speechlessness.[90] In the narrative, Corinne is likened to Domenichino's Sibyl whereas Lucile resembles Correggio's Madonna. When Oswald and Lucile go to see the paintings existing in Bologna, Oswald spends a long time in front of Domenichino's Sibyl. Upon noticing Oswald's behavior, Lucille asks him whom he prefers Domenichino's Sibyl or the painting that they had seen earlier, Correggio's Madonna. Oswald answers, "La Sibylle ne rend plus d'oracles; son génie, son talent, tout est fini : mais l'angélique figure du Corrège n'a rien perdu de ses charmes; et l'homme malheureux qui fit tant de mal à l'une ne trahira jamais l'autre" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 562). The sibyl belongs to a tradition that has become obsolete.[91] Earlier in the novel, when Oswald is about to leave Italy, Corinne once again says, "Je me regrette" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 396). She regrets how she has lost her gift of improvisation and has fallen into silence. Ellen Peel argues that under Oswald's influence, Corinne undergoes a series of "retreats" that bring her into silence ("Corinne's Shift to Patriarchal Mediation" 105). She moves from public oral performances to more withdrawn modes of communication ("Corinne's Shift to Patriarchal Mediation" 105). Thus, Corinne's increasing speechlessness represents the manner that patriarchy would silence women's voices.

The fact that Corinne is silenced by patriarchy is apparent by the evolution of her improvisations; while in her first improvisation she speaks in the name of all Italian people, she in her subsequent performances gradually becomes more limited in the expansion of her subject. Birkett maintains, "Corinne's improvisations" display both "personal and public

[90] Corinne exclaims, "Oh ! pourquoi donc Oswald a-t-il étouffé ces dons que j'avais reçus du ciel et que je devais faire servir à exciter l'enthousiasme dans les âmes semblables qui s'accordent avec la mienne ?" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 516).
[91] Michelangelo's painting on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel portrays five sibyls one of which is the famous sibyl of Cumae. According to a legend, the sibyls prophesied the birth of Christ (Italie 424).

statements" and are concerned with both "public and private speech" (403). However, the public assertions in Corinne's improvisation get more limited to private declarations during the progression of her oratorical appearances. Christine Planté argues that the "I' undergoes a transformation during the succession of Corinne's improvisations ("Sur les improvisations de Corinne" 76-77). In Corinne's first improvisation "the "I' defines itself within a tradition of Italian poets, and it enlarges itself to a 'we' that represents the Italian people" ("Sur les improvisations de Corinne" 76-77).[92] In her second improvisation, "the 'we' undergoes a new restriction since it now designates a community of suffering and forsaken women before being redefined in reference to the human community of thinkers and creators ("Sur les improvisations de Corinne" 77)." In her "Last Song", "the 'I' acquires a strong autobiographical resonance since Corinne addresses her individual destiny" ("Sur les improvisations de Corinne" 77). Planté remarks that "this evolution of the 'I' results in a defeat, and appears like a failed and untenable evolution by Corinne because she is woman" ("Sur les improvisations de Corinne" 77). Planté suggests that because of women's situation, there is the "impossibility", for Corinne, to speak, as a poet, in the name of all ("Sur les improvisations de Corinne" 78). Because she is a woman, Corinne is restricted from assuming the traditional public role of a poet; as a result, she is silenced. In other words, in a modern patriarchal world, the sibyl is extinct.

There is a recurrent imagery in Madame de Staël's writings of the faded flower, which represents illness due to betrayed love, the effects of melancholia, stifled enthusiasm, and the impact of conformity on women's creativity. It can be argued that her emaciated body also

[92] My translation. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent translations of Planté's argument are mine.

represents her, to use Susan J. Wolfson's words, "anger" "turned" "inward"[93] by the fact that she feels that she has wasted her talent and poetic genius for the sake of romantic love. She says, "J'aurais rempli ma destinée, j'aurais été digne des bienfaits du ciel, si j'avais consacré ma lyre retentissante à célébrer la bonté divine manifestée par l'univers" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 582). This idea of the body turning ill due to betrayed love is also manifested in Madame de Staël's Sapho. When Alcée tries to convince Sapho of the force of her still existing talent, Sapho objects "Le serpent a piqué la fleur; qu'importe qu'elle soit encore sur la tige!" (Sapho 507). The lover's betrayal is here linked to a profound emotional disappointment that is manifested in bodily decay. This flower imagery is also re-used by Madame de Staël in De l'influence des passions. She explains, "À quel prix ne voudrait-on pas n'avoir jamais aimé, n'avoir jamais connu ce sentiment dévastateur, qui semblable au vent brûlant d'Afrique, sèche dans la fleur, abat dans la force, courbe enfin vers la terre la tige qui devait et croître et dominer !" (De l'influence des passions 130). When Oswald's departure approaches, Corinne's poetry is no longer joyful but is filled with pain, and she is compared to a fragile flower threatened by an imminent death: "cette fille du soleil, atteinte par des peines secrètes, ressemblait à ces fleurs encore fraîches et brillantes, mais qu'un point noir causé par une piqûre mortelle menace d'une fin prochaine" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 355). Interestingly, this flower imagery is also found in Delphine when Léonce recognizes the extent to which Delphine is hurt because of his behavior. He says, "Insensé que j'étais! J'ai foulé sous mes pas ta destinée, et je voudrais te relever maintenant, pauvre fleur que j'ai flétrie; mais tu retombes, et l'inflexible nature me punit" (Delphine II 354). Moreover, Corinne says that enthusiasm

[93] par.18. In "Editing Felicia Hemans for the Twenty-First Century", Wolfson writes, "Cora Kaplan interpreted the 'normative morality' and the 'emerging Victorian stereotype of the pure, long-suffering female' in Hemans's work as a symbolic discipline that turned anger inward and romanced death as the only resolution: 'bitter, feminine but pre-feminist consciousness is disguised by proper sentiments." (par. 18).

becomes a withered flower under the conservative sky of England : "car l'émulation, l'enthousiasme, tous ces moteurs de l'âme et du génie ont singulièrement besoin d'être encouragés, et se flétrissent comme les fleurs sous un ciel triste et glacé" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 365). The faded flowery imagery gets repeated in relation to the way mediocrity depletes enthusiasm and genius: "le souffle desséchant de la médiocrité malveillante" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 380). In another instance, Corinne relates that even when there were occasions when women did venture outside conventional thinking, their impulse was stifled by common opinion. She says, "la petite opinion…étouffait entièrement ces germes" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 370). The suffocated growth of the seeds represents how small town English society thwarts women's genius. This withered flower may represent an aesthetic or the enthusiasm that cannot survive under Napoleon's oppressive regime. Furthermore, Nanora Sweet argues that in the eighteenth century debate between the sublime and the beautiful,[94] "it was de Staël who privileged the feminine beautiful as an instrument of a woman's aesthetics" (174). She argues:

> Since Sappo, the broken or crushed flower has been associated with the feminine… Characterized by a shifting spectrum of 'hues' and by a cycle of growth, destruction, and resurgence, a floral aesthetics suggests not only fragility but also a productivity and recurrence available in history and for consciousness (174).[95]

[94] Introduced by Edmund Burke's Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1757).
[95] As Sweet points out this motif of crushed flower is to be found in Sapho's "lament for a maidenhead", where Sapho writes: "like a quince-apple / ripening on a top / branch in a tree top / not once noticed by / harvesters or if / not unnoticed, not reached / Like a hyacinth in / the mountains, trampled / by shepherds until / only a purple strain / remains on the ground" (Sappho: A New Translation 34).

Drawing from Sweet's indications, it can be said that the imagery of Sapho's broken flower is also undertaken by Staël to explore female vulnerability but also thwarted female growth due to conformity.

Corinne's profound dejection that leads her towards a slow death is a form of repressed anger and a kind of chastisement for Oswald. In this regard, Ellen Peel argues that "self-destructiveness" is a kind of "indirect revenge", where anger is directed inward[96] ("Corinne's Shift to Patriarchal Mediation" 109). When Corinne realizes that she might be losing him, she withdraws from the relationship even though she is emotionally invested in it. In other words, Corinne, by not revealing her presence to Oswald in England, not writing back to him, and refusing to see him at the end of the narrative, tests his love and succeeds in punishing him for his betrayal. Joan Dejean explains, "Au sens strict, Corinne ne se suicide pas. Mais elle réussit à contrôler sa mort de manière à en extraire le plus grand châtiment possible pour l'homme qui l'a trahie, réalisant ainsi un véritable suicide" (117). In Réflexions sur le suicide, Madame de Staël explains that for the individual abandoned by the loved one, suicide alone is not satisfying because of the need for retribution:

> Le courage de se tuer ? Mais dans cette situation le secours même de cet acte terrible est privé de la sorte de douceur qu'on peut y attacher ; l'espoir d'intéresser après soi, cette immortalité si nécessaire aux âmes sensibles est ravie pour jamais à celle qui n'espère plus de regrets. C'est là mourir en effet que n'affliger, ni punir, ni rattacher dans son souvenir l'objet qui vous a trahie ; et le laisser à celle qu'il préfère est une image de douleur qui se place au-delà du tombeau, comme si cette idée devait vous y suivre. (122)

[96] Wolfson has a similar argument and refers to "turned anger inward" in "Editing Felicia Hemans for the Twenty-First Century", p.11.

For Corinne, who at the end of the narrative lives with the regret of having abandoned her art, there is satisfaction in the thought that Oswald is punished for having made her suffer. Moreover, the acute depression that Corinne undergoes after Oswald's betrayal stands in stark contrast to her energetic and enthusiastic personality that she had before she met him. Corinne's extremely weakened figure reveals that her excessive melancholy is a form of, as Wolfson has put it, "anger" "turned" "inward"[97] that leads her to a slow suicide[98]. This self-destructive behavior is a kind of rebellion against patriarchal oppression. Lokke points out that Corinne's death is a "statement of political protest" ("Sibylline Leaves" 169). Similarly, Gita May argues that suicide becomes "an act of supreme rebellion and defiance by the artist" living in a society that expects conformity to established rules ("The Fascination of Suicide" 175). Thus, her self-neglect leads her to a gradual self-annihilation that is a form of resistance against gendered power structures.

In the Romantic era, genius was often associated with melancholia and madness. Anne C. Vila argues that Corinne is a reaction to a widespread biomedical belief that developing one's genius resulted in the detriment of "one's health, sexuality, and social identity" (63). Moreover, Vila maintains that alienists associated the intensive intellectual study done by male scholars with melancholia, so that it was gendered as a masculine illness (56). While melancholia was believed to be brought about by various causes, there was a distinct group, the Aristotelian type, whose melancholy was considered to have been triggered by their extreme sensibility, their genius, their profound meditation, mental over-exertion, fervent

[97] par.18 in Wolfson's "Editing Felicia Hemans for the Twenty-First Century".

[98] The theme of suicide is also present in Delphine and in Sapho. When Delphine learns that Léonce will be executed, in the conclusion to the novel, she drinks poison in order not to survive her lover, and in another version (Madame de Staël has multiple versions of the ending of Delphine) she, not unlike Corinne, slowly dies. Sapho also commits suicide by throwing herself into the sea when her lover Phaon betrays her by marrying Cléonce.

enthusiasm, and exuberant imagination (Vila "Marginality, Melancholy, and the Femme Savante" 57). By linking Corinne's extreme sensibility and genius with a Aristotelian type of melancholia, Madame de Staël made the illness genderless while at the same time reaffirming the belief that women's melancholia was often linked with unrequited love (Vila "Marginality, Melancholy, and the Femme Savante" 60 & 63). Corinne's fame is thus linked with the fate of the genius poet who was destined to have, as Vila puts it, a "tragic glory" and to be living on the "margins of society" ("Marginality, Melancholy, and the Femme Savante" 60). For instance, Corinne says that her stepmother regarded her qualities and her genius, as illness. She relates, "Ma belle-mère était presque aussi importunée de mes idées que de mes actions…car elle voulait que les facultés qu'elle n'avait pas fussent considérées seulement comme une maladie" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 366-367). Moreover, in Sapho, the heroine exclaims, "Fatal présent que ce génie, qui semble, comme le vautour de Prométhée; s'acharner sur mon coeur!" (Act 11 Scene VIII; 500 Oeuvres completes v.3). In this instance Sapho's genius has turned against herself, which relates to the association made in the nineteenth century between genius and madness. Similarly, in Mirza,[99] the heroine is also described as being a female genius. When Ximéo stops loving her and marries another, Mirza, like Corinne, also dies. Mirza exclaims, "les âmes passionnées ne connaissent que les extrêmes" (Mirza 77). This idea that there is no middle ground for passionate souls can relate to the way genius was linked with mental instability. In other words, too much genius was believed, as Vila suggests, to be unhealthy.

Corinne's broken-heartedness leads her to mental illness and to the experience of a series of psychosomatic symptoms, which can be described in a nineteenth-century context as

[99] Mirza is one of Madame de Staël's early short fictions

a type of hysteria. When Oswald returns to Italy, the narrator mentions that Corinne had not taken off of her black dress ever since her return from England. Despite the obvious suggestion that the black dress signifies her mourning, it is also an indication of a type of madness that has taken Corinne.[100] Thus, Corinne's obsession along with her physical symptoms—fainting, dyspnea, physical shaking, fever— could be described as an hysteria, a prevalent medical diagnosis for women in the nineteenth century. Nancy Rogers argues:

> Although the theories of the origin of hysteria differ – from the "wandering uterus" theory so familiar in medical history from the time of the Egyptians, to the new emphasis on neurological and cerebral disorders promulgated in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain and France—the consensus among physicians and writers seems to have been that the delicate and vulnerable qualities so praised in nineteenth-century women naturally led to a rise in hysteria among them. Whether the disease was believed to be located in the uterus, the brain, or the nervous system, it was considered a function of a nervous temperament and the heightened emotions of which only women were capable. (251)[101]

However, Madame de Staël links sensitivity not only to the female constitution but also to the person endowed with genius. Indeed, the narrator locates Corinne's capability for suffering to the fact that she is a person of genius endowed with great sensibility: "Quand une personne de génie est douée d'une sensibilité véritable, ses chagrins se multiplient par ses facultés mêmes : elle fait des découvertes dans sa propre peine, comme dans le reste de la nature, et le malheur

[100] In Charles Dickens's Great Expectations, Miss Havisham's madness is also apparent by the fact that she never leaves her bridal dress after she is deserted by her fiancé at the altar.
[101] Also quoted by Anne Amend-Söchting on p.107, note 8.

du cœur étant inépuisable, plus on a d'idées, mieux on le sent" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 419). On the other hand, Corinne's illness is clearly linked to her broken heart; her sickness thus has, as Anne Amend-Söchting points out, psychosomatic origins (102 & 110). Failure of romantic love is specifically linked with madness when she claims that the only way for her to be preserved from such a fate is to guard herself from love.[102] In this regard, Bladine Saint Girons argues, "l'amour ne mène à la souffrance que parce que la souffrance est première. L'amour n'est pas une protection : il met l'être à nu et l'expose encore davantage jusqu'à le rendre à sa première et fondamentale déréliction" ("Un deuil éclatant de bonheur" 127). Basing her argument on Susan Sontag's Illness as Metaphor, Rogers maintains that Corinne's physical illness can be interpreted as a metaphor for the lost love caused by Oswald's betrayal (253). Indeed, just before Oswald's departure, she utters a prayer that the moment her lover ceases to love her, that she may also cease to live:

> Dieu puissant qui m'entendez ! dit-elle, en levant ses regards vers le ciel, Dieu ! qui n'êtes point impitoyable pour les peines du coeur, les plus nobles de toutes ! ôtez-moi la vie, quand il cessera de m'aimer, ôtez-moi le déplorable reste d'existence, qui ne me servirait plus qu'à souffrir. (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 443)

Corinne's illness is thus almost a wish-fulfilled occurrence. In fact, Rogers asserts that Sontag's most crucial argument is that in the nineteenth-century, illness was believed to be "almost an act of will" (254). Corinne's disease may be defined as having psychosomatic

[102] Adela Pinch explains that eighteenth-century scientists believed that "Individuals with sensitive bodies had greater sensibility, but they were also susceptible to over-stimulation, melancholy and madness" (Romanticism: An Oxford Guide 52).

origins, which in a nineteenth century context would be interpreted as a type of female hysteria.

Lack of enthusiasm is another factor that leads the Improvisatrice to a psychosomatic illness. Gengembre writes, "Si l'enthousiasme peut faire naître la douleur, le manque d'enthousiasme est une souffrance, une maladie de l'âme" ("Une mélodie intellectuelle" 137). Gengembre relates this lack of enthusiasm with Corinne's experience in England ("Une mélodie intellectuelle" 137). Drawing from Gengembre's argument, it can be said that this idea of psychosomatic illness is related to the fact that Corinne was neither able to experience nor to express her need for enthusiasm in the small town where she was living in England. For example, difficulty in breathing can be interpreted as one of the psychosomatic symptoms that Corinne experiences in relation to the small town's conformity in Northumberland (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 371).[103] In another instance in the chapter entitled "Histoire de Corinne", the link between psychosomatic disorder and lack of enthusiasm is made clear by the fact that Corinne explicitly mentions that her health was suffering because of the absence of enthusiasm, which was causing her mental pain when she was in Northumberland (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 381).[104] In Italy, Corinne develops poor health when she loses her creative enthusiasm because of Oswald's betrayal. Thus, there is a relation between loss of enthusiasm and the development of psychosomatic illness in Corinne.

The fall and the suffering, of the Staëlian heroine, are caused by overwhelming passion. Delphine becomes alienated from her society where she was once a favorite because

[103] Corinne says, "mais cette uniformité est une douleur habituelle pour les caractères appelés à une destinée qui leur soit propre ; le sentiment amer de la malveillance que j'excitais malgré moi se joignait à l'oppression causée par le vide, qui m'empêchait de respirer" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 371).
[104] Corinne says, "Ma santé souffrait tous les jours davantage du climat et de mes peines intérieures ; mon esprit avait besoin de mouvement et de gaieté, je vous l'ai dit souvent, la douleur me tuerait" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 381).

of her relationship with Léonce and because she is led by her goodness more than her reason[105] when she helps the clandestine couple Monsieur de Serballane and Thèrese. Similarly, when Sapho only tries to find fulfillment through her relationship with Phaon, and when he betrays her, she loses her interest in her art and in her fame, and then commits suicide. Balayé notes that, for Madame de Staël, "passions have to be distanced from ourselves, if we want to be happy because the overpowering joy they offer does not last and takes away all colour from life when it disappears" (Lumière et Liberté 55). She writes, "Happiness does not reside in a fulfilled passion which does not bring serenity; Madame de Staël knows that there is in fame as in love just a momentary exaltation" (Lumière et Liberté 55-56). Furthermore, Chantal Thomas explains that in De l'influence des passions Madame de Staël warns that passion "isolates" the individual from his community, and "destroys the happiness, the identity, and autonomy of the subject" (19 & 21).[106] For Madame de Staël, thwarted growth of the female genius is the price to be paid for devastating passion. In fact, the author holds that "passion, this impulsive force that overtakes man independently of his will, is the real obstacle to individual and political happiness" (De l'influence des passions 28).[107] Thus, Corinne, having been won by passionate love, surrenders her liberty to artistically create. This passion that fatally overtakes Corinne is described by the narrator when the heroine is shaken by the fact that she might never see Oswald again : "Elle s'attendait à chaque instant à recevoir la nouvelle de son départ, et cette crainte exaltait tellement son sentiment, qu'elle se sentit saisi tout à coup par la passion, par cette griffe de vautour sous laquelle le bonheur et l'indépendance succombent" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985,

[105] This can be contrasted with the Enlightenment movement with its emphasis on reason.
[106] My translation
[107] My translation

125).[108] As the narrator states, it is Corinne's independence and happiness that is lost by the force of her passion. Indeed, it is this lethal passion that she has for Oswald that causes her inability to fulfill her public role as poet in Italy and to fall into silence. In De l'influence des passions, Madame de Staël writes, "les femmes…cherchent un maître, et se plaisent à s'abandonner à sa protection ; c'est donc presque une conséquence de cet ordre fatal, que les femmes détachent en se livrant, et perdent par l'excès même de leur dévouement" (127). Thus, the overwhelming nature of passions and extreme feminine devotion lead the Staëlian heroine to a downfall.

Corinne's depression can be traced within the narrative by contrasting her two improvisations. For instance, the difference between the two settings of her first two performances signal the heroine's increasing melancholia. Planté argues: "les improvisations sont prises dans un rapport d'opposition marqué: Rome et Naples, ville et nature, jour et nuit, apparition triomphante et solaire de Corinne dans toute sa gloire, et chant du cygne" (90). Planté explains that Corinne's improvisation at the Capitol ended with a reference to the Christian gospel[109] whereas her second one ends with a question without an answer[110] (91). Planté explains, "La référence à un christianisme bienveillant et à une protection providentielle a laissé place à la crainte d'un Dieu qui juge,[111] et à une forte angoisse d'abandon" (91). Balayé also points out that, during her improvisation in the countryside of Naples, Corinne "prophesies the misfortunes that will overwhelm her" (Écrire, lutter, vivre 117). By the time that she performs her second improvisation, Corinne can be compared to a Blakeian subject

[108] Also quoted by Thomas in her Preface on page 19 of De l'influence des passions.
[109] Corinne says: "le créateur a dit : les lis ne travaillent ni ne filent, et cependant quels vêtements des rois pourraient égaler la magnificence dont j'ai revêtu ces fleurs" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 66). The reference is from Matthew 6: 26-34.
[110] Referring to pain, Corinne says: "Ô mon Dieu, que veut-elle nous annoncer?" (Corinne 354).
[111] Throughout the narrative, the dark premonitions that she has about her end is linked to the fact that Corinne feels that "the whole of paternal authority condemned her love" (Corinne 504).

that moves from a state of innocence to a state of experience. This is especially noticeable, as Vincent Whitman remarks, that in her second improvisation there is a "struggle for mastery" between "nature, poetry, and history" that was absent in her improvisation at the Capitol (62). In Corinne's Last Song, Corinne says that "of all the faculties of the soul that she possesses the faculty of suffering is the one that she exercised wholly" (584).[112] Another aspect that is noticeable in Corinne's second improvisation is that she invokes the role of destiny: "Que voulaient dire les anciens quand ils parlaient de la destinée avec tant de terreur" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 354). In contrast to the hopefulness expressed in Corinne's first improvisation, by the time she performs her second improvisation, melancholia has infiltrated the expression of her enthusiasm, which is apparent by the difference in the setting, the expression of uncertainty and fear, the reference to suffering, and the role of destiny.

Corinne's fall from her glory can be explained by a twist of fate, an element that often distinguishes classical literature; however, Madame de Staël adds a psychological dimension to the theme of destiny that is characteristic of the genre of the novel. Corinne has in her drawing-room copies of the statues of Niobe and the Lacoon, which invoke, as Balayé points out, "suffering"[113]—a condition Corinne is capable of experiencing with the same intensity as her enthusiasm. Balayé explains that both Niobe and the Laccoon witness the death of their children; in addition, both figures signify "the victory of destiny—humans are helpless against the gods" (Écrire, lutter, vivre 121). Because women do not usually go to war after a disappointed love, Madame de Staël instead of making Corinne die in battle like the courtly love knights, she represents Corinne as a flower that that has received a fatal sting (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 355). Indeed, Corinne's pain can be compared to courtly love ideals where

[112] This is similar to the suffering displayed by Felicia Hemans's heroines in Records of Woman.
[113] (Écrire, lutter, vivre 120)

the knight, as M. H. Abrams notes, "suffers agonies of mind and spirit" (48); in this instance, the emotional torture is portrayed by Madame de Staël from a women's subjectivity, instead of the traditional male point of view. Furthermore, Simpson points out how that "the narrator also assumes paradoxically that 'destiny' is not destined but contingent" (350). Indeed, Corinne, earlier in the narrative, had warned Oswald not to be deceived by her fame and her enthusiastic imagination because the extent of her potential to feel pain could be fatal to her reason and life: "Arrêtez, dit Corinne, vous ne me connaissez pas ; de toutes mes facultés la plus puissante, c'est la faculté de souffrir…la peine excite en moi je ne sais quelle impétuosité qui peut troubler ma raison ou me donner la mort" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 126). Not only does Madame de Staël present amorous courtly love suffering from a woman's subjectivity, but she also adds a psychological perspective to the theme of destiny present in the novel.

Even though Oswald is given a favorable depiction by the narrator throughout the narrative, the word "ingrat", used to describe him when Corinne is planning her "Dernier chant", renders his character portrayal problematic. The narrator says, "elle désira que l'ingrat qui l'avait abandonnée sentît encore une fois que c'était à la femme de son temps qui savait le mieux aimer et penser qu'il avait donné la mort" (Corinne Balayé ed. 2000, 521). The term "ingrat" links Oswald to the tradition of male libertines described in works such as Les Liaisons Dangereuses.[114] For example, in Mozart's Don Giovanni, which was inspired by the legend of *Don Juan*, the abandoned heroine, Donna Elvira, calls the hero an "âme ingrate" for having broken her heart.[115] By alluding to literature that describes how male inconstancy

[114] Apart from novels describing the exploits of libertines and women's victimization, Vallois argues that "the majority of French novels in the eighteenth century condemned feminine passion to a tragic fate" (Fictions Féminines 115). (My translation)

[115] Dona Elvira bewails, « Cette âme ingrate m'a trahie, / … / Mais trahie, abandonnée, / j'ai pour lui de la pitié / Cette âme ingrate etc. » (82 Callas : Passion).

destroys women, Madame de Staël criticizes gender power relations. Béatrice Didier writes, "Mme de Staël est redevable à une tradition du roman du libertinage au XVIII siècle, comme moyen de critique sociale" ("Présentation" 22). Indeed, Corinne says, "les hommes ne savent pas le mal qu'ils font, et la société leur persuade que c'est un jeu de remplir une âme de bonheur, et d'y faire ensuite succéder le désespoir" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 585).[116] As Gooden points out, Oswald, in his last letter to Corinne, blames "fate" for having "defeated them" (Dangerous Exile 161; Corinne 570). However, Gooden explains that it is "less a matter of fate than one of social custom and sexual convenience" (Dangerous Exile 161). Thus, when it comes to the tradition of abandoned women, described by Lawrence Lipking in Abandoned Women and Poetic Tradition, the word "ingrat" is a typical term used to describe the rake—the man who seduces and then abandons women. In fact the complete title of Mozart's opera is the "Rake Punish'd or Don Giovanni".[117] In the same manner, it can be said that Oswald is punished for the rest of his life by the fact that he will be constantly reminded of Corinne through her double, her ghost, Juliette. Furthermore, it is apparent that Madame de Staël was preoccupied with male inconstancy even in her earliest attempts at fiction writing, which she claims to have composed when she was not yet twenty ("Préface"; Mirza; Oeuvres Complètes). This is evident in the short story Mirza where Ximéo goes to the war in attempt to distance himself from Mirza, who had allowed herself to fall freely in love with Ximéo after being convinced by him that he truly loved her. Similarly, in Zulma, another of Madame de Staël's short fictions, the theme of male inconstancy is again at the center. In this short story, Zulma kills her lover when he emotionally betrays her, and then she kills herself. By alluding

[116] Also quoted by Gooden on p.161 in Dangerous Exile.
[117] Il dissoluto punito, ossia il Don Giovanni.

to eighteenth century literature describing male inconstancy, Madame de Staël questions the dynamics of sexual power between genders.

In addition to the author's criticism of gender power relations, there is this repeated theme that when romantic love fails, the heroine dies. Madame de Staël points out how there is danger for women when they make love their sole goal in life at the expense of their own personal growth. In Zulma, the heroine asks her lover to leave her if he does not truly love her; for, she still has resources within herself to forget him. Zulma says, "j'ai dans la vie, dans l'espace, dans ma pensée, des retraites pour vous fuir" (Œuvres complètes 103). However, she warns him that she would lose her inner strength if he abandons her after she has become deeply attached to him. This danger is also apparent in Mirza, when the heroine says: "ma famille, mes amies, mes concitoyens, j'ai tout éloigné pour dépendre de toi seul" (Œuvres complètes 75). This is an instance of how the heroine sacrifices her social support system for the sake of her lover; as a result of this dependence, she loses her inner power. In Histoire de Pauline, the heroine is a victim of the machinations of a libertine who orchestrates her fall. Although nineteenth century society is tolerant of male (heterosexual) licentiousness, it punishes women by rejecting them from the marriage market if they fall prey to male libertines. This is apparent by Édouard's conviction that there can be no marital happiness to a couple if the wife has had prior sexual knowledge (Histoire de Pauline 95; Oeuvres Complètes). Similarly, Oswald has a recurrent fear that Corinne may be sexually experienced. Thus, the staëlian heroine loses her inner strength and dies for having sacrificed her genius and her community to win her lover in a society that does not admit sexual knowledge in an unmarried woman.

On the other hand, there is also a form of didacticism in Corinne that is apparent when the narrator invites the reader's pity for Corinne. Madame de Staël's didacticism invites sympathy for the heroine's vulnerability while warning against the dangers of passion. The narrator says:

> Combien elle est malheureuse, la femme délicate et sensible qui commet une grande imprudence, qui la commet pour un objet dont elle se croit moins aimée, et n'ayant qu'elle même pour soutien de ce qu'elle fait ! Si elle hasardait sa réputation et son repos pour rendre un grand service à celui qu'elle aime, elle ne serait point à plaindre (…) Mais traverser ainsi seule des pays inconnus, arriver sans être attendue, rougir d'abord, devant ce qu'on aime, de la preuve d'amour qu'on lui donne (…) qu'elle humiliation digne pourtant de pitié ! (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 477).

In this passage, the didacticism has two functions; one is to stir the reader's sympathy for the heroine who risks her reputation and her self-esteem by going after Oswald; and the other is to warn the female reader not to imitate Corinne's imprudence. As Katherine Sobba Green points out, didacticism was typical of courtship novels. Green writes, "courtship novels were didactic; they theorized overtly on women's conduct—at times replicating the repressive views of male-authored conduct books, and at other times expressing the incipient feminism that had begun to question received roles for women" (13). This nascent feminism is apparent in Staël when she, as mentioned earlier, criticizes gender power relations by alluding to the literature describing ruthless libertines. Furthermore, Vallois refers to Madame de Staël's short story Zulma where the heroine is absolved by the tribunal for having killed her lover by appealing to the court's sympathy (Fiction Féminines 40). She writes, "La structure narrative

spéculaire ne sert donc pas uniquement à souligner la rupture individu-société ; elle suggère aussi la possibilité d'une communication" (Fictions Féminines 40). Thus, Vallois explains that this death in spectacle does not signify the rupture between society and the individual, but rather it suggests the potential of an intercourse that shatters the "opposition between passion and reason" through the "reconciliatory sentiment of pity" (Fictions Féminines 40).[118] She writes, "Or cette communication particulière, susceptible de dépasser l'opposition passion-raison se révèle seulement possible par le sentiment réconciliateur de la pitié—affection nouvellement redécouverte par les tenants du préromantisme" (Fictions Féminines 40). Thus, the author's didacticism consists of favoring reason against passion; yet as much as she cautions women against the overpowering influence of passion, she invites sympathy for the fallen woman who has yielded to human vulnerability, the overwhelming emotions that lead to broken heartedness.

Having theorized on the importance of fiction in moving the reader into sympathy, Madame de Staël draws attention to the condition of women in order to bring about social change and to offer female readers better coping strategies. In De La Littérature, Madame de Staël maintains that to study the art of moving the reader into sympathy is to deepen the secrets of virtue (68). Similarly, in Essais sur les Fictions, Madame de Staël states that fiction is important because it serves to move the reader to greater virtue and to break the isolation of the sensitive beings who cannot voice their sentiments, and it alleviates the pain of those suffering emotionally (Oeuvres Complètes 70 & 72). In relation to this idea, Vallois explains that for Madame de Staël fiction plays a "cathartic role" (Fictions Féminines 30). In other words, this therapeutic role that fiction has can be illustrated by Lawrence Lipking's

[118] My translation. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent translations of Vallois's arguments are mine.

explanation that, “The abandoned women, in her aloneness, persuades the rest of us that we are not alone” (40). Moreover, Madame de Staël would be contesting women’s plight by emphasizing the limitations that are imposed on the female gender. In “fragments des pensées de Corinne”, Corinne declares:

> Que les hommes sont heureux d’aller à la guerre, d’exposer leur vie, de se livrer à l’enthousiasme de l’honneur et du danger! Mais il n’y a rien au dehors qui soulage les femmes ; leur existence, immobile en présence du malheur, est un bien long supplice. (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 522)

In this passage, Madame de Staël stresses the agony women undergo by being immobilized in the confinement of what is supposed to be their domestic haven while men risk their lives in the outside world. This is well demonstrated in Corinne’s second improvisation, in which she pays tribute to some famous women who experienced great sorrow because they lost close male companions. Corinne says:

> Quelques souvenirs du Coeur, quelques noms de femmes, réclament aussi vos pleurs. C’est à Misène, dans le lieu même où nous sommes, que la veuve de Pompée, Cornélie, conserva jusqu’à la mort son noble deuil ; Agrippinne pleura longtemps Germanicus sur ces bords. (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 352-353)

She emphasizes the strength of these women’s devotion and their sacrifices in face of their men’s absence or death. Corinne asks, “Qu’arrivent-t-il quand l’absence ou la mort isolent une femme sur la terre?” (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 353). Through the medium of fiction, the author would both attempt to bring the reader to a greater awareness on women’s difficulties and to break the isolation of suffering women.

Corinne's dance of the Tarantella is another type of improvisation, in which the expression of enthusiasm bears divine inspiration. During Corinne's dance, the narrator says:

> Corinne, en dansant, faisait passer dans l'âme des spectateurs ce qu'elle éprouvait, comme si elle avait improvisé, comme si elle avait joué de la lyre ou dessiné quelques figures ; tout était langage pour elle…et je ne sais quelle joie passionnée, quelle sensibilité d'imagination électrisait à la fois tous les témoins de cette danse magique, et les transportait dans une existence idéale où l'on rêve un bonheur qui n'est pas de ce monde. (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 148).

The dance is another form of improvisation; it is characterized by Corinne's ability to communicate her enthusiasm to her spectators, and as Karyna Szmurlo points out, by a "desire for transcendence" (1).[119] Esterhammer writes, "More than any of her verbal improvisations, it is Corinne's spontaneous performance of a dance, the Neapolitan *Tarantella*, that provides the novel's ideal example of ecstatic improvisational experience shared by performer and audience" ("Landon, Staël, and Female Performers in Italy" 231). Indeed, the dance is a form of improvisation that conveys an "ecstatic" enthusiasm. In order to order understand the Tarantella's significance in the novel, it is useful to refer to Pino De Vittorio who explains that the tarantella is danced "in Puglia and throughout southern Italy". De Vittorio writes:

> The tarantella's origin is connected with tarantism, a disease or a form of hysteria that appeared in Italy in the fourteenth century and was obscurely associated with the bite of the tarantula spider; victims were apparently cured by frenzied dancing of the tarantella. (n.p)

[119] My translation. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent translations of Szmulro's article are mine

Thus, the Tarantella is connected to a madness that overtakes the victim when bitten by the tarantula spider, and the illness caused by the insect's poison is cured by dancing. Szmurlo states, "Etant donné que la danse de Tarente est également associée aux agitations du malade piqué par l'araignée venimeuse, lesquelles exorcisent le poison, la frénésie de Corinne semble thérapeutique. La danseuse réagit ainsi contre l'influence corruptive de l'inertie qui la menace" (10). Indeed, victims of the tarantula spider are prone to a torpor that can be alleviated with dancing and music. Jean-Paul Combet maintains that Athanasius Kircher in the seventeenth-century believed "that the treatment of music and dance is effective because it keeps the victim active, instead allowing him to submit to a state of lethargy that follows the bite" (n.p.). The idea that the dance is "therapeutic" is relevant because Jeanne Moskal, the editor of Rambles, quoting from John Murray, explains that the Tarentella was "Traditionally performed by victims of the tarantula, 'whose bite is the reputed cause of that peculiar melancholy madness which can only be cured by music and dancing […] but it is now generally admitted by the natives themselves, that the imagination has great influence in its production'" (372 Quotes from Murray[120]). The idea that the bite of the spider caused "melancholy madness" that could be cured by dancing is consistent with what happens to Corinne at the end of the narrative when she becomes melancholic. It is because she has no longer access to this ecstatic enthusiasm made apparent in her improvisations that she is not able to overcome her despondency. Furthermore, Corinne is compared by the narrator to a flower that has been bitten: "cette fille du soleil, atteinte par des peines secrètes, ressemblait à ces fleurs encore fraîches et brillantes, mais qu'un point noir causé par une piqûre mortelle

[120] Moskal quotes from: Octavian Blewitt, Handbook for travelers in Southern Italy; being a guide for the continental portion of the kingdom of the two Sicilies, including the city of Naples and its suburbs, Pompeii, Herculaneum, Vesuvius, the Islands of the Bay of Naples, and that portion of the Papal States, which lies between the Contorni of Rome and Neapolitan frontier. (London: John Murray, 1853)

menace d'une fin prochaine" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 355). Corinne's relationship with Oswald represents this poisonous bite that she has received but that she is able, at first, to counteract with her enthusiasm. It is only when, at the end of the narrative, Corinne succumbs to apathy that she is no longer able to fight this poisonous sting and dies. Moreover, Szmurlo argues that the "*tarantella* symbolizes the waking of female autonomy" (10). Corinne's "female autonomy", however, is doomed because of Oswald's conventional views on women. Moreover, the link with improvisation is also apparent by the fact that, as the narrator points out, the dance was not dependent on the memorization of the steps, but rather on the expression of sentiment and of the imagination (Corinne 148). Szmurlo adds:

> Dans Delphine et Corinne, la danse fonctionne en tant que forme discursive dont les héroïnes se servent habilement pour se nommer en face d'autrui. Tout en satisfaisant le désir de transcendance, le déploiement dans l'espace s'équivaut à la parole spontanément prodiguée sous l'impulsion des foules, et rejoint sur le plan analogique, l'improvisation sibylline, la désinvolture théâtrale, ou même la conversation mondaine. (1)

Corinne's dance is, like her improvisation, spontaneous and expressive.

Both Corinne and Delphine's enthusiasm is described using oriental imagery during the scenes when they dance. Corinne is compared to a Bayadère, an Indian girl who is a sacred dancer, and her dance is described as being "magical" and as "quick as lightning" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 148 & 149). While dancing a polonaise, Delphine is wearing an Indian shawl that emphasizes her form and her long hair. Her dance is described as being expressive and inspired and exercising upon the imagination a great power (Delphine I 162). It conveyed "ideas and poetical sensations" that could only be felt under an "Oriental sky" (Delphine I

162). The exoticism enables the dancers' enthusiasm to be expressed. Concerning the Tatantella's healing effect, Joscelyn Godwin writes, "The musical cure may in fact enhance the experience for them by bringing their frantic movements into a rhythm, while the constant repetition induces a kind of trance state, as in African tribal drumming or the rituals of the Whirling Dervishes" (34-35). This ecstatic and trance-like state when dancing the Tarantella suggests oriental imagery and possession by divine inspiration. Corinne's genius is conveyed through the entrancement of her dance, felt by Corinne and communicated to her audience.[121] It is also worthy to note that during her crowning ceremony Corinne is dressed like a Sybil, an inspired woman who can transmit oracles, but the narrator also draws attention to an Indian shawl that she wears around her head that emphasizes the beauty of her black hair (25).[122] Exoticism, enthusiasm, and divine inspiration are linked by the fact that she wears an Indian shawl and is dressed like a sibyl. About Corinne's crowning ceremony, Balayé writes, "elle est poète inspiré, chargé d'une mission divine" (Écrire, lutter, vivre 114). Thus, the description of the Improvisatrice's aesthetics of improvisation and enthusiasm strongly depends on oriental imagery in order to convey her inspiration.[123]

Another element for which oriental imagery is used is to suggest how Corinne's poetic improvisations come close to bearing the divine word. Balayé comments that "like the mythological being (the sibyl), the heroine of the novel is an improvisatrice, bearing the divine word, and expressing it poetically in the breath of inspiration" (Écrire, lutter, vivre 114).

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[121] The linking of exoticism with poetic genius is not a motif unique with Madame de Staël; it appears with other Romantic writers such as with S. T. Coleridge's Kubla Khan.

[122] The narrator describes Corinne's dress: "Elle était vêtue comme la Sibylle du Dominiquin, un schall des Indes tourné autour de sa tête, et ses cheveux du plus beau noir entremêlés avec ce schal" (Corinne Balayé ed. 2000, 25)

[123] The orient represents a fantasy where there is a greater access to enthusiasm and creativity because there is more freedom for improvisation and less need for artificial conventions.

Balayé explains that, for Madame de Staël, "the improvisator, in the image of the prophets and of the sibyls, would be the highest form of the poet genius if the difficulties of language did not remind him of his human condition" (Écrire, lutter, vivre 142). Madame de Staël writes "Le véritable poète conçoit pour ainsi dire tout son poème à la fois au fond de son âme : sans les difficultés du language, il improviserait, comme la sybille et les prophètes, les hymnes saints du génie" (De l'Allemagne 208).[124] Thus, Balayé notes, "a grandiose image is drawn of the writer, who is considered as guide and prophet, which would thrive during the Romantic generation, but which has its roots in the eighteenth century" (Écrire, lutter, vivre 142).[125] Vallois notes that the sibyl, the "possessed" prophetess, could also be perceived as "hysterical" (The Novel's Seductions 130). Balayé writes, "Le vocabulaire de Madame de Staël abonde en images de lumière, de feu, de sorcellerie et de magie pour décrire le poète livré à l'inspiration" (Écrire, lutter, vivre 142). As Balayé points out, the author borrows from withcraft imagery to suggest the prophetic qualities of the Improvisatrice. Thus, Madame de Staël closely links the improviser poet with the prophet.

The vocabulary describing the Improvisatrice renders her an enchantress, a siren, and a seductress Eve. These terms recall images of archetypal women who stir male attraction but also fear. Damien Zanone argues "L'identité de Corinne surgit dans la référence, dans l'enthousiasme d'une sorte d'apothéose culturelle…Si l'on tient à placer l'analyse à un niveau psychologique, on dira que le portrait tracé est celui archétypal, de la femme supérieure 'savante'… et 'artiste'" (53). This image of the superior woman would be feared because she

[124] (Also quoted by Balayé on page 142 note 11 in Écrire, lutter, vivre).
[125] Moreover, there is a mixture of religious and pagan imagery in the portrayal of Corinne since we see her described both as a Christ-figure and as a priestess of ancient mythology. In relation to this idea, Doris Y. Kadish, drawing from the critic Anita Brookner, points out that the famous painting of Marat's death is an example of the merging of the dividing lines between the "sacred and the profane", which is one of the greatest artistic achievements that occurred during the Revolution (116). [Kadish bases her argument from Anita Brookner's Jacques-Louis David. London: Chatto & Windus 1980 (note 15; 215)].

unsettles patriarchal conceptions of gender roles. Moreover, as Dejean points out, in the OED the term improvisatrice is associated with the words "enthusiasm" and "bewitching" (Fictions of Sappho 178). Indeed, Oswald finds her beguiling; he wonders, "Son charme tenait-il de la magie ou de l'inspiration poétique ? était-ce Armide ou Sapho ? " (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 77).[126] Dejean explains that in Tasso's Gerusalemme liberata, Armida is a seductive princess who charms knights away from their quest (Fictions of Sappho 178). As Dejean argues, Corinne is seen by Oswald as an Armide who uses her "poetic inspiration" to "charm" the "defenseless" young male (Fictions of Sappho 178). For Madame de Staël, improvisation is a "Sapphic language", which is representative both of female "literary genius" and of a "threat" to patriarchal hierarchy (Dejean Fictions of Sappho 179). The Improvisatrice, through her capacity to be able to both be driven and communicate enthusiasm, becomes a "literary enchantress"[127] (Dejean Fictions of Sappho 179). In a letter to Corinne, Oswald writes, "Vous êtes une magicienne qui inquiétez et rassurez alternativement…Corinne, Corinne, on ne peut s'empêcher de vous redouter en vous aimant !" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 158). This suggests how Oswald is both drawn towards Corinne but also fears her. Moreover, John Playfair, in his review of the novel in the Edinburgh Review, refers to Corinne as being a "Syren" who charms Oswald with the "voice of wisdom.[128] By comparing Corinne to a "Syren" and to "wisdom", Playfair alludes to archetypal images of the seductress and superior woman.

[126] Also quoted by Dejean (178).
[127] It is also worthy to note that Corinne refers to the Italian language as "langue enchantresse" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 83). If we look at the title it says "Corinne or Italy"; Corinne is equated with Italy, a country with a "langue enchantresse", and thus we can infer that Corinne, as a representative of Italy, is an "enchantresse". However, Vallois notes that the "substitution of toponym for patronym cannot help but be problematic for the reader" (The Novel's Seductions 132). Moreover, Corinne's artistic freedom of expression is enabled by the fact that Madame de Staël sets the narrative in Italy. Jane Stabler writes, "Madame de Staël, Mary Robinson, Felicia Hemans, and Letitia Landon turned to Southern figures of the improvisatrice, Sappho, and the troubadours to define a free-flowing women's poetic" (35).
[128] Playfair writes, "If he (Oswald) could not think of devoting himself to Corinna; If he could not reconcile his doing so with his ideas of happiness, he should have tied himself, like Ulysses, to the mast, and fled from a Syren, who charmed, as Homer's did, with the voice of wisdom" (Edinburgh Review 11 (1907) p. 185).

Despite the fact that Playfair points out Corinne's feminine qualities—her capability of devotion, nurturing, and sacrifice towards Oswald—, the word "Syren" represents Corinne as an enchantress possessing wisdom and connotes a less desirable form of femininity.[129] As Bram Dijkstra points out, Syrens have often been portrayed as seducing men away from their path with their femininity and outward sexuality, and often represent nineteenth century masculine fears of female assertiveness and independence (Chapter VIII). Similarly, Vallois writes:

> Le rôle de séductrice est évidemment typiquement féminin, rien là donc que de très traditionnel, mais Corinne apporte pourtant un nouvel ingrédient au stéréotype de l'Eve séductrice. Le désire que l'anime est en effet pas seulement de se faire aimer comme "femme" mais c'est 'le désir universel de plaire' comme 'femme poète'. Désir doublement coupable par rapport à la loi du père, il incite Oswald à une double transgression. (Fictions Féminines 122)

[129] Francis Jeffrey in his praise of Madame de Staël writes "that she has pursued a more lofty as well as a more dangerous career" (2 Edinburgh Review 21, 1813). Jeffrey maintains that she is the most distinguished female writer of her time; while other women writers have merely ventured to elucidate subjects first elaborated by male writers, Madame de Staël has aimed at "extending the boundaries of knowledge" (Ibid). By presenting truly original material, Madame de Staël has entered a masculine intellectual domain, and has been accepted by both English male critics, Playfair and Jeffrey. Similarly, in The Monthly Review, Madame de Staël is also recognized as one of the best female writers of all times; she is compared to an Aspasia or a Zenobia who has gained authority over male thinkers of her age (243 The Monthly Review 92,1819-1820). The writer holds that she "manifests a depth of thought and a sagacity of inference so truly masculine, as to give some countenance to the suspicion that a political Achilles lurks beneath the feminine garment" (254 Ibid). In this instance, the author is given masculine traits for the eloquence of her political statements. Anne C. Vila argues that physicians of the time maintained that female constitution and sensitivity was "highly conducive to empathy, maternal tenderness, and social sagacity, but at the same time incompatible with what Roussel called the 'dangerous labors involved in intense study'" (54). Furthermore, Vila explains that ambitious intellectual women were seen as being so deviant in social and medical concepts that they were termed by Cabanis as "'ambiguous beings ('des êtres incertains') who are properly speaking of neither sex'" (55).

By her desire to please both as a woman and as an artist, as Vallois points out, Corinne is vulnerable to the accusation of being a seductress Eve that captivates with language,[130] which is a female archetype that bears a more severe form of male disapproval. Finally, Gengembre argues that she captivates through her enthusiasm, a "necessary ingredient for her power of seduction; enthusiasm defines Corinne's personality and its effect on others" ("L'enthousiasme dans Corinne ou l'Italie" 135). Thus, the imagery characterizing the Improvisatrice both provokes male admiration and anxiety.

The Improvisatrice's death can be interpreted as a type of public performance. When Oswald looks at Corinne's portrait at the end of the narrative, he is astonished by the look of death portrayed in her features: "ce qui le frappe surtout ce fut l'inconcevable changement de la figure de Corinne. Elle était là, pâle comme la mort, les yeux à demi fermés ; ses longues paupières voilaient ses regards et portaient une ombre sur ses joues sans couleur" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 566-567). The fact that she has a portrait made of her dying self confirms the idea that Corinne chooses a death in spectacle as a way to punish Oswald. Anne Amend-Söchting explains, "En se laissant mourir, Corinne choisit la voie d'une mort en spectacle, elle s'attache à la reconstruction de son moi en faisant inconsciemment un détour par les autres" (109). In a similar line of thought, Vallois argues, "Le suicide féminin staëlien ne peut donc s'accomplir que devant une conscience spectatrice: acte cathartique et accusateur mais avant tout, comme l'a montré par ailleurs Starobinski,[131] 'spectacle'" (Fictions Féminines 38-39). By having her portrait painted, she stage manages her own death, and thus has a better control

[130] Vallois maintains that "there is this theme of the seductress Eve in the feminine novels of the time, which stress the original sin, which predestines women by the nature of their sexes to the crime of femininity" (Fictions Féminines 123).
[131] Vallois is referring to J. Starobinsky, "suicide et mélancolie chez Mme de Staël." Madame de Staël et l'Europe.

over the effect she produces on Oswald. Interestingly, Madame de Staël has a poem that she translated from Goethe titled: "La Bayadère et le dieu de l'Inde".[132] In this poem, Brama, an Indian god, becomes the Bayadère's lover. When he dies, the Bayadère, like a sati, throws herself into the flames. Drawing from the author's poem and from her reference of Corinne as being like a Bayadère,[133] Corinne may be compared to a sati, which is suggested by her death in spectacle and by her slow suicide after Oswald abandons her. Thus, Corinne's death performance has as a goal to control Oswald but also to consolidate her identity through others.

Through her artistic vocation, Corinne inhabits the public eye, which puts her in the predicament of being seen as a courtesan. As mentioned earlier, there is a suggestion[134] that the author may have partly derived her inspiration to create Corinne from Aspasia the ancient Greek orator. Ianetta explains that Aspasia was a hetaera, a high rank courtesan in Athens, which "associates her with sensuous eloquence, wide-ranging accomplishments, and public spectacle" (97). Through the restrictions placed on the female gender in English society, Corinne is also vulnerable to be put in the position of a courtesan through her availability as an artistic performer and through her oratorical skills. Because she inhabits the public eye through her improvisations, Corinne's private virtue is suspected by Le comte d'Erfeuil who influences Oswald. As Vallois points out, Corinne is first introduced in the narrative through Oswald's focalization at the Capitol in the chapter entitle "Oswald" (Fictions Féminines 153); therefore, she is judged through the scrutiny of the male gaze. Vallois writes, "Dans Corinne nous retrouvons donc la situation classique de la mise en perspective de l'être feminine sous le

[132] This poem was published by Madame de Staël's son in Oeuvre Posthumes in his edition of her complete works
[133] On page 148 of Corinne Balayé ed. 1985,
[134] Argued by Ianetta

regard étranger de l'amant" (Fictions Féminines 153). In other words, Madame de Staël portrays how conservative views condemned the reputation of women who were in the public eye. Le comte d'Erfeuil says, "Une femme seule, indépendante, et qui mène à peu près la vie d'un artiste, ne doit pas être difficile à captiver" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 86). Le Comte d'Erfeuil's remark points out to the idea that women with fame and experience in the public world were looked upon with suspicion and were not considered as suitable for being potential wives. In addition, because of stereotypical beliefs about Italian woman and their culture, Corinne's Italianism becomes in Oswald's mind another obstacle that prevents the couple's happiness. Oswald considers, "C'est la plus séduisante des femmes, mais c'est une Italienne ; et ce n'est pas ce cœur timide, innocent, à lui-même inconnu, que possède sans doute la jeune Anglaise à laquelle mon père me destinait" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 94).[135] Oswald disapproves of Italian women because he thinks that they are indifferent of public opinion (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 152-153), and that they are less constant. In other words, they do not conform to his idea of feminine propriety as displayed by English women. Balayé writes "Bourré de préventions et de stéréotypes, il imagine par exemple que toutes les Italiennes sont passionnées mais mobile et pis encore, idées qui finiront par lui retirer injustement toute confiance en Corinne après son retour en Angleterre" (Écrire, lutter, vivre 207). Because Oswald is controlled by his father's view of proper feminine behavior, he obeys patriarchal law in his choice of a wife when he decides to marry. Thus, Oswald is ambivalent towards

[135] The fact that Oswald refers to Corinne as an "Italienne" indicates that she is seen as an 'other', a woman who can use her charms, like a siren, to lure him away from his ideas of (English) propriety. In other words, Corinne is like an enchantress. This is also apparent by the way that Corinne strives to be accepted by Oswald's father: "Quand Lord Nelvil arriva, je désirai de lui plaire, je le désirai peut-être un peu trop, et je fis pour y réussir infiniment plus de frais qu'il n'en fallait ; je lui montrai tous mes talents, je dansai, je chantai, j'improvisai pour lui, et mon esprit, longtemps contenu, fut peut-être trop vif en brisant ses chaînes" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 373). This indicates how Corinne is seen as an anomaly in English society for being Italian and for being a woman with an artistic personality.

Corinne because her experience in the public sphere was in opposition to the patriarchal conception of a wife as being a domestic saint.

Madame de Staël represents how female artistic fame is in conflict with the domestic ideology for women in the Romantic period. Because in the early nineteenth century Englishwomen were educated to be submissive to a patriarchal system by being modest, timid, reserved, passive, dependent, and self-effaced, women with fame were incompatible with the feminine virtues upheld by the cult of domesticity. Similarly, Oswald, influenced by his father, is in favor of the separate spheres of the sexes in which women are restricted within the domestic realm. He says to Corinne "Vous ne me sacrifierais donc pas, lui dit Oswald, ces hommages, cette gloire" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 145). Oswald is expecting her to sacrifice her fame to please him. This is exemplified when Corinne is dancing a *Tarantella* with Prince Amalfi, who according to Szmurlo, represents a "chivalric tradition" where the knight is a protector who desires to "elevate" and allow his lady to have fame and "reign sovereign" (8). This kind of chivalric generosity of Italian men toward their female partner, which offers women freedom of self-expression and fame, establishes Italy, as English Showalter puts it, as a "feminist utopia" for the heroine ("Corinne as an Autonomous Subject" 191). This behavior stands in contrast with Oswald's who, when he witnesses Corinne's success during the tarantella, withdraws and feels that Corinne's fame separates her from him (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 149).[136] On Oswald's reaction, Szmurlo comments, "Ce protecteur pour la vie refuse de partager le succès de l'aimée. Le rayonnement de Corinne l'immobilise et il y prévoit déjà

[136] Ironically, when Oswald is completely assured of her devotion to him, he leaves for England. Madame de Staël writes, "Dans toutes les situations de la vie, l'on peut remarquer que dès qu'un homme s'aperçoit que vous avez éminemment besoin de lui, presque toujours il se refroidit pour vous" (De La Littérature 326).

l'échec de l'amour" (9). In sum, Madame de Staël portrays how patriarchy in nineteenth century England opposes artistic fame for women.

In the same way, Madame de Staël also examines how literary recognition for women writers often comes into conflict with the domestic ideology. She writes, "La gloire même peut être reprochée à une femme, parce qu'il y a contraste entre la gloire et sa destinée naturelle. L'austère vertu condamne jusqu'à la célébrité de ce qui est bien en soi, comme portant une sorte d'atteinte à la perfection de la modestie" (De La Littérature 332). As Madame de Staël suggests, fame is not recommended for women in the early nineteenth century because it is considered to be an attack on their feminine virtue. By discouraging women from attaining fame, patriarchal society prevents them from developing their literary and artistic skills and ensures that women never achieve excellence but only a superficial knowledge of their art. Thus, Corinne's fame represents the fantasy of a woman poet who desires to be recognized with praise and apotheosis at a time when women were denied the right to genius.[137] Corinne says, "Je ne me flattais pas, reprit Corinne, que ce couronnement du Capitole me vaudrait un ami ; mais cependant en cherchant la gloire, j'ai toujours espéré qu'elle me ferait aimer. A quoi servirait-elle, du moins aux femmes sans cet espoir !" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 98). In addition, Madame de Staël draws attention to the way the early nineteenth century was condemning serious literary study for women because it "détournaient ainsi leurs pensées de leur premier intérêt, les sentiments du coeur" (De La Littérature 334). Women were prevented from acquiring literary and artistic fame because of a patriarchal belief that it made them unsuitable wives and mothers.

[137] However, it may be important to distinguish, as Baldine Saint Girons points out, between different types of fame, such as "an eagerness to succeed, a surrendering to the gift of genius, an aiming at glory, and a desire for immortalization" ("Une deuil éclatant de bonheur" 125) (My translation). Saint Girons argues that Corinne's fame is characterized by an abandonment to artistic inspiration ("Un deuil éclatant de bonheur" 125)

Beyond the irreconcilability of female artistic fame with domestic happiness, Madame de Staël suggests, however, that women ought to sacrifice artistic pursuit in order to fulfill the destiny of their sex by ensuring success in marriage and motherhood. In De l'influence des passions, there is ambivalence in Madame de Staël's claims about women and fame. She writes :

> En étudiant le petit nombre de femmes qui ont de vrais titres à la gloire, on verra que cet effort de leur nature fut toujours aux dépens de leur bonheur. Après avoir chanté les plus douces leçons de la morale et de la philosophie, Sapho se précipite du haut du rocher de Leucade…Enfin avant d'entrer dans cette carrière de gloire, soit que le trône des Césars, ou les couronnes du génie littéraire en soient le but, les femmes doivent penser que, pour la gloire même, il faut renoncer au bonheur et au repos de la destinée de leur sexe, et qu'il est dans cette carrière bien peu de sorts qui puissent valoir la plus obscure vie d'une femme aimée et d'une mère heureuse. (103)

Madame de Staël argues in this passage that women are more at an advantage when they forego fame in order to follow the conventional feminine gender role of domesticity. Similarly, Madame de Staël's Sapho advises Cléonce not to seek fame but to look for a husband for security and haven ("Sapho" 498). She compares female genius to a tree whose roots cannot resist the tempest, and thus will wither (498).[138] In De l'Allemagne, Madame de Staël writes, "la gloire elle-même ne saurait être pour une femme que le deuil éclatant du

[138] Sapho exclaims, "Ah! Cléone, choisis un ami fidèle et confie-lui tes jeunes années; ne vois que lui sur cette terre; ne cherche point les lauriers dont j'ai pu ceindre ma tête ; ne les cherche point…Vois l'état où je suis ; le génie des femmes est comme un arbre qui s'élèvent jusqu'aux nues, mais dont les faibles racines ne peuvent résister à la tempête. Cléone, Cléone, cherche un abri auprès de tes pénates, et loin des temples où règnent seulement la gloire et la beauté" ("Sapho" 498).

bonheur" (218 vol. II). In other words, fame leads women to sorrow because it makes them become unsuccessful and unfulfilled in the domain of romantic love. Furthermore, Madame de Staël writes:

> Les femmes sentent qu'il y a dans leur nature quelque chose de pur et de délicat, bientôt flétri par les regards même du public : l'esprit, les talents, une âme passionnée, peuvent les faire sortir du nuage qui devrait toujours les environner ; mais sans cesse elles le regrettent comme leur véritable asile. (De la littérature 340)

In this extract, Madame de Staël claims that women will eventually seek refuge from fame because it is contrary to their nature. The idea that there is something pure and delicate in their nature that can be withered evokes once again flower imagery. In other words, the woman author can be corrupted by the public gaze, which can be understood as the male gaze. Thus, she indicates that her world sees women's artistic pursuit as being unsuitable for the female gender. Contrarily to her claims, Madame de Staël not only enjoyed fame as a writer and political figure but also sought fame through her writings and public engagements. According to Claire Brock, she is a writer who extensively engaged with the issue of fame, and thus "became one of the most important fame theorists of her period" (139). Indeed, as Angelica Gooden indicates, the portrait of Madame de Staël as Corinne in a state of enthusiasm painted by Madame Vigée Le Brun indicates the author's growing celebrity (Madame de Staël Delphine and Corinne 18).[139] This ambivalence[140] expressed by Madame de Staël suggests that she had to some degree internalized patriarchal constructions of the feminine gender role.

[139] Goodden writes, "Mme Vigée Le Brun painted Staël herself as Corinne, playing the lyre in a state of enraptured inspiration, and it was probably in the light of her growing celebrity that Staël chose to portray

Although this ambivalence exists in Madame de Staël's earlier writings, she, as Lokke notes,[141] changed her views on talented women and fame by the time she wrote in 1814 her second preface to Lettres sur les écrits et le caractère de J. J. Rousseau. In this second preface, she holds that developing women's talents would help them expand their minds. She writes: "Ces talents ont sans doute leurs inconvénients, comme toutes les plus belles choses du monde; mais ces inconvénients mêmes me semblent préférables aux langueurs d'un esprit borné, qui tantôt dénigre ce qu'il ne peut atteindre, ou bien affecte ce qu'il ne saurait sentir" (Oeuvres Complètes de Madame de Staël Tome I 2). In other words, she argues that it is better to risk that women become famous and enter the public sphere rather than limit their talents and spirit with dullness. She addresses the conflict that early nineteenth-century society feels towards women and fame. She explains that society accepts that women engage in literary study as long as they keep their interest within the domestic sphere and do not attempt to become authors, and engage in competition with men in the public world (Oeuvres Complètes de Madame de Staël 2). The key ideas in her statement are women authors and "rivalry" with men (Oeuvres Complètes de Madame de Staël 2). It can thus be inferred that it is the power that women authors possess that is feared and viewed negatively by her society. Moreover, one can infer from Madame de Staël's writings that it may be women's self-defeating beliefs

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Corinne as she did" (Madame de Staël: Delphine and Corinne 18). It is interesting to note, as Linda H. Peterson indicates, that Landon also impersonated Corinne by dressing like her (120).

[140] It may be argued that the author also expresses ambivalence concerning women's subjugation. This is reflected in a letter written by Corinne to Oswald defending Italy. She writes, "il est assez simple que, dans une telle désorganisation de tous les pouvoirs publics, les femmes prennent beaucoup d'ascendant sur les hommes, et peut-être en ont-elles trop pour les respecter et les admirer" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 162-163). Thus, can we infer that Corinne is saying that when public authorities are reorganized, women shall once again, including herself, regain their submissiveness. Does the author imply that women's independence in Italy is an anomaly that will resolve itself when 'rightful' patriarchy is re-established? Balayé notes that Madame de Staël is influenced by Rousseau; she, however, does not accept his conception, as expressed in l'Emile, of women's 'natural' inferiority (Lumière et Liberté 30). Thus, there is a struggle inside of her due to Rousseau's influence but also due to her father's negative views on women's position (Lumière et Liberté 30). Corinne symbolizes the conflict between female genius and society (Lumière et Liberté 30-31).

[141] Tracing Women's Romanticism (53).

about their artistic talents, stemmed from society's opinions, which lead women to abandon their genius. She writes, "mais le talent a besoin de confiance. Il faut croire à l'admiration, à la gloire, à l'immortalité de l'âme pour éprouver l'inspiration du génie" (De L'Allemagne II 307). Women, if allowed to expand their horizons and forego mediocrity of spirit, risk becoming on par with men—an event which, as the author hints, her society is not ready to accept.

In the novel, the symbolism of the veil is not only attached to questions of female beauty, but also to Corinne's sense of alienation. It is after the episode of watching Oswald pay special attention to Lucile in England that Corinne, looking at herself in the mirror and feeling discouraged over her inability to match her sister's beauty, decides to veil herself in public to hide her identity. Corinne feels a shattered sense of her self-image when she looks at herself in the mirror and realizes that she does not meet idealized patriarchal notions of womanhood. Apart from dressing herself in black, a color traditionally associated with mourning and death, she also veils herself which reveals that being unable to meet standards of female beauty, she feels unacceptable and ashamed of her self-image. This motif of the black veil is also present in Delphine. When Delphine dresses herself in a black domino to meet Léonce at the masked ball, the child Isore feels scared and starts crying as if she foresees Delphine's doomed destiny: "l'enfant, comme s'il eût été averti que ce vêtement de la gaieté, cachait le désespoir, répétait sans cesse en pleurant: 'Est-ce que ma seconde maman va faire comme la première, est-ce que je ne la reverrai plus ?'" (Delphine II 126). Once she is at the masked ball, Delphine says, "j'avais peur de ma solitude au milieu de la foule; de mon existence invisible aux yeux des autres, puisque aucune de mes actions ne m'était attribué" (Delphine II 126). Delphine's sense of solitude and invisibility relates to her experience of

being condemned in a society that is morally rigid. Szmurlo explains, "Signe de la 'solitude fondamentale' ou de 'l'angoisse existentielle', le voile dramatise la réduction de la spontanéité du moi. La société semble forcer la femme supérieure à se taire, à se cacher ; littéralement, elle la voile dans le sens étymologique du mot: couvrir, estomper" (4). The fact that Léonce does not recognize her at the ball and looks at her with a disdainful expression is an indication of the extent of Delphine's isolation.[142] Furthermore, just before her departure for England, Corinne is visited by a lady who is dressed in black and is veiled to hide the fact that she has a facial deformity due to an illness (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 474-475). This woman's disfigurement obliges her to live at the margins of society. She is the heroine's double—a forewarning to Corinne of the way she will become an outsider and will feel isolated and invisible in England. This veiled lady is also an omen of the way Corinne will veil herself at the end of the narrative to hide the way her illness has transformed her youthful appearance. In another instance while she is in England to find Oswald, she observes her sister praying, but she does not dare to reveal her presence to her. Madame de Staël writes:

> Dans ce moment Corinne était prête à se découvrir à sœur, à lui redemander, au nom de leur père, et son rang et son époux ; mais Lucile fit quelques pas avec précipitation pour s'approcher du monument, et le courage de Corinne défaillit. . . Corinne était placée derrière les arbres, et sans pouvoir être découverte, elle voyait facilement sa sœur qu'un rayon de la lune éclairait doucement ; elle se sentit tout à coup saisie par un attendrissement purement généreux. (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 502)

[142] Her estrangement is also due to the fact that Léonce is at the mercy of the public's opinion. In fact, he is at the masked ball because he wants to revenge himself on de Montalte who spread bad rumors about Delphine.

In this incident of the narrative, Corinne feels affectionate feelings for her sister, but she does not have the courage to approach her. Just like the creature in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Corinne exists as an outsider in English society, and she makes herself, as it is apparent in this scene, become invisible. Gooden links this scene with the political exile Madame de Staël suffered, and draws the conclusion that "Being outside love is to be denied completeness, and is another form of the foreignness exile represents" (The Dangerous Exile 305). In Corinne's case, it is also her genius that puts her outside of love and isolates her. Thus, Corinne becomes alienated because society creates a rupture between her sense of creative and independent self and gender role expectations. Similarly, during Corinne's last song, she makes her appearance in front of Oswald and in front of her audience in a veil, as a way to hide her changed physical appearance due to her illness. The recurrent symbolism of the veil in Madame de Staël's novels suggests how she took an interest to the way society alienates women who do not conform to societal expectations.

Moreover, the secrecy of Corinne's last name enables her to enjoy a kind of liberation from patriarchal constraints. Oswald's preoccupation over the mystery of Corinne's surname suggests his disapproval over the freedom she enjoyed outside patriarchal limitations. Oswald ponders, "Enfin Corinne n'était point connue sous son véritable nom, et menait depuis plusieurs années, une vie beaucoup trop indépendante ; un tel mariage n'eût point obtenu (lord Nelvil le croyait) l'approbation de son père" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 124). Because Corinne's last name is not revealed, there is no apparent paternal lineage which makes her birth suspicious to illegitimacy and associates her family and herself to doubtful social standing and morality, and this is precisely what Oswald's father disapproves and Oswald fears the most. Ellen Peel and Nanora Sweet explains that Corinne "fights for her right to

express her genius, and eschewing a patronymic, choosing her own name, she enjoys great independence" (206). Therefore, by omitting her last name, Corinne is able to escape a patrilineal lineage that would have restricted her art by imposing patriarchal standards of proper feminine behavior upon her.[143] When she first escapes England and arrives in Italy, Corinne, as she had promised her stepmother, does not reveal her real name to anyone, but takes the name of Corinne, the ancient Greek poetess (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 386). Ianetta argues, "Corinne is a pen name for a woman whose aristocratic family would be ashamed by her public role as a performer and poet" (105). Thus, Corinne by choosing a pen name liberates herself to practice her art. Furthermore, Margaret Cohen argues that whereas the "Father's death" compels the son (Oswald) to "reproduce" (patriarchal) will, the same event is a liberation for the daughter (Corinne) who, through her artistic engagements, "transgresses" paternal Law (113).[144] By not having a father's last name, Corinne is able to live without the patriarchal restrictions on female artistic expression. However, meeting Oswald makes her realize how her status as a woman artist within patriarchy suffers because she does not fit a conventional feminine role. Thus, the secrecy of Corinne's last name liberates her from patrilineal constraints, but also makes her background look suspicious, which puts her at a disadvantage with Oswald who is faithful to patriarchal beliefs.

Madame de Staël promotes the equality and advancement of women by advocating for their education, as that will foster open channels of communication between marriage

[143] Similarly, the fact that Delphine becomes a widow at a young age enables her to become "a free agent in the patriarchal order" (Dejean 162).

[144] However, in the end, as Cohen points out, both Oswald and Corinne succumb to melancholia through their failure to bypass the father's influence (113).

partners.[145] Balayé explains that for Madame de Staël "instruction must equally be given to men and to women for society to progress faster" (Lumière et Liberté 31). Corinne's power as the Improvisatrice, her eloquence and her wealth of knowledge, is fascinating to Oswald but also threatening because her education distances her from the ideals of domesticity, as the narrator indicates, "Mais tout en admirant, tout en aimant Corinne, il se rappelait. . .combien elle différait de l'idée que son père s'était formée de celle qu'il lui convenait d'épouser" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 144). On the other hand, even though Lucile's behavior is the exemplar of feminine virtue, her upbringing prevents her from engaging in a stimulating relationship with her husband. For instance, while Oswald is dancing with Lucile at the ball organized by Lady Edgermond, he feels bored of her timidity. The narrator says, "Ce trouble et cette réserve touchèrent beaucoup lord Nelvil dans le premier moment ; mais comme cette situation ne variait pas, il commençait un peu à s'en fatiguer" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 498-499). Moreover, when Lucile perceives Oswald's aloofness, her learned submissiveness prevents her from communicating honestly with him about her concerns. In Adelaïde et Théodore, an early fiction by the author, one of the reasons that the love relationship fails between the lovers is their reluctance from communicating openly to each other. The narrator says: "Le jour où l'on s'impose la loi de cacher un seul de ses sentiments à l'objet qu'on aime,

[145] Madame de Staël's argument for the education of women is similar to Mary Wollstonecraft's who proposed that women's education would allow them to stand on equal footing with men. In Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Wollstonecraft writes, "It is time to effect a revolution in female manners, time to restore their lost dignity, and make them (as a part of the human species) labor, by reforming themselves, to reform the world" (132). Thus, French and British romantic women writers were in dialogue in their aim of bringing about a social revolution by helping the public become aware of women's plight. Mellor writes:

> Feminine romanticism was truly a revolution in the sense that it envisioned the making of a new social order which would overthrow an older order; it was what Wollstonecraft rightly called 'a revolution in female manners.' It envisioned the creation of this new order through peaceful and pedagogical means, through gradual social evolution and what we would now call 'consciousness-raising'. (Romanticism and Gender 212)

Through their insistence on women's education, Romantic women writers were subverting gender role restrictions imposed by patriarchal ideals. Madame de Staël inspired English women writers to promote women's education for the benefit of social progress.

l'impression de ce sentiment au-dedans de soi devient incalculable…le silence dévore le cœur qui se le commande" (Adelaïde et Théodore 83). In Histoire de Pauline, the heroine, under Madame de Verseuil's advice, does not reveal the secrecy of her past life; this lack of open communication leads the couple towards unhappiness and Pauline towards death.[146] Being a proponent of women's education, Madame de Staël contends:

> Si l'on vouloit que le principal mobile de la république française fût l'émulation des lumières et de la philosophie, il seroit très-raisonnable d'encourager les femmes à cultiver leur esprit, afin que les hommes pussent s'entretenir avec elles des idées qui captiveroient leur intérêt. . . Eclairer, instruire, perfectionner les femmes comme les hommes, les nations comme l'individus, c'est encore le meilleur secret pour les buts raisonnables, pour toutes les relations sociales et politiques auxquelles on veut assurer un fondement durable. (De La Littérature 328 & 331)

Thus, better education for women will lead towards greater understanding between marriage partners. She asserts that as long as women are prevented from expanding their intellectual horizons, they will be like dolls who although might be more submissive to their husband's authority would be intellectually incompatible with them (Oeuvres Complètes de Madame de Staël 2). Similarly, Corinne relates that when she was living in England, she could have sent a mechanical doll to take her place, and the doll would have fully fulfilled her expected gender role (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 369). Madame de Staël argues that in order for marriage partners to have conjugal felicity, it is important to allow women to develop their minds

[146] At the unhappy turn of events caused by her secrecy, Pauline laments "fatale dissimulation" (Oeuvres Complètes 99).

through education,[147] so that there will be "mutual admiration"[148] (Oeuvres Complètes de Madame de Staël Tome I 2). In sum, women's education would stimulate better communication between marriage partners, which would lead to more fulfilled marital relationships

Moreover, Madame de Staël compares women's subordination to political slavery[149] by stating that patriarchy may fear giving more education to women lest they should "revolt" against their "domestic slavery"[150] (Oeuvres Complètes de Madame de Staël Tome I 2). In De la littérature, she sheds light on how women writers of her time are made to feel like outsiders in a society that treats them with contempt by likening the situation of literary women to the "pariahs of India" belonging to no particular class (341-342). In her last letter to Oswald, Corinne writes to Oswald: "Ah! Trouverez-vous mieux que ma tendresse ? Savez-vous que dans les déserts du nouveau monde j'aurais béni mon sort, si vous m'aviez permis de vous suivre? Savez-vous que je vous aurais servi comme une esclave ?" (Corinne Balayé ed. 2000, 515).[151] Vallois explains that this idea of slavery makes allusion to women's political dependence (Fictions Féminines 147); yet, Vallois maintains that at another level the reference to slavery signifies Italy's subjugation, which was under Napoleon's empire at the time (Fictions Féminines 146-147). This image of the slave in a harem that desires to please and seduce represents a resistance of the subjected subject against political subjugation (Vallois;

[147] This idea is from the second Preface of Lettres sur les écrits et le caractère de J. J. Rousseau on p.2 of Oeuvres Complètes de Madame de Staël Tome I.
[148] My translation
[149] The link between slavery and women's rights shows how early feminists were appropriating the discourse on slavery to add weight to their own argument about women's emancipation.
[150] From the second preface to Lettres sur les écrits et le caractère de J. J. Rousseau on p.1 of Oeuvres Complètes de Madame de Staël Tome I.
[151] In another instance, the narrator says, "En vain Corinne, à force d'amour, se faisait son esclave" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 193).

Fictions Féminines 147-148). Thus, as Caroline Franklin maintains, in addition to the novel's feminist inclination, it also expresses an anti-colonial agenda (559).

In conclusion, the heroine's "improvisational aesthetics", in Corinne ou l'Italie, are a means for Madame de Staël to represent a resistance against Napoleon's ideology. In contrast to prevalent discourses on enthusiasm during the Enlightenment period, she engages with the concept of enthusiasm by situating it within the notion of reason. Furthermore, Madame de Staël represents the conflict between the domestic ideology and female artistic vocation. The author portrays how early nineteenth century society creates a conflict between a female artistic vocation, fame, and the domestic ideology, which result in feelings of fragmentation in the woman artist. As portrayed by her psychosomatic illness and her madness, Corinne's sense of self becomes disintegrated as she feels unable to meet patriarchal standards of the female gender role. Her extreme despondency and her slow suicide are signs of interiorized anger and a form of rebellion against patriarchal constraints. Madame de Staël represents female victimization in order to stir the sympathy of the reader and to create social change. She would thus inspire British romantic women writers to advocate for women's education in order to revolutionize sexual politics.

Mary Shelley and the Art of Improvisation

Mary Shelley, together with her husband, was greatly fascinated with the art of improvisation. Her numerous descriptions of extempore poetry in her letters about Tommaso Sgricci, in her essays such as "the English in Italy", "Madame de Staël", and "Metastasio" and in Valperga, and Lodore indicate that it is an art that she wanted to explore in her own creative process. Her descriptions of Sgricci and Paganini suggest that she was interested in the ideal inspired state that the improvisator represented. Her observations of this mythical creative power of the poet suggest that through her descriptions of improvisation she engaged in dialogue with poets of her time about Romantic poetic theory. This is also apparent, in Valperga, in her portrayal of the characters of Euthanasia and Beatrice, whom she likens to Madame de Staël's improvisatrice. In addition, Shelley was aware of negative discourses about improvisatores since her discussions of Sgricci, Paganini, Metastasio, and Madame De Staël show that she contributed to the dialogues about performers of improvisation during the Romantic era. In this chapter, I will show how Shelley participates in Romantic poetic theory through her observations and depictions of the art of improvisation.

There is strong indication that Shelley closely observed the art of improvisation by the fact that she shows an interest in the actual figure of the improvisator. This is demonstrated by her portrayal of the improvisator Tommaso Sgricci. In a letter to Claire Clairmont, she writes that she fancies that the Improvisatore Sgricci, whom she met in Italy, is good but that only time will tell if he is truly virtuous (January 14th 1821 LMWS Vol. I Bennett 177). A week later, on January 24th 1821, she writes to Clairmont that Sgricci discussed many issues with her with a "frankness" and "gentleness", which proved to her that the rumors circulating about his "irregular life" were false (LMWS Vol. I Bennett 182). These negative rumors about his

"irregular life" to which she makes allusion may be the negative views that were generally held about improvisatores. For instance, Angela Esterhammer points out that Improvisatores were often seen as being "greedy", "superficial", and "exploitative" ("The Improviser's disorder" 332 & 333). The only regret that Shelley expresses about Sgricci is that "he also, as some poets of our country, finds greater pleasure in the momentary applause of a theatre and in the admiration of women, than in studying for posterity" (LMWS Vol.I Bennett 165). Although she is sorry about the fact that he revels in his fame rather than commit himself to serious study, she points out that this does not make him different from some other poets in England. Therefore, his interest in "momentary applause" is not to be interpreted as being a negative view that Shelley has exclusively of improvisatores but of poets in general who demonstrate this shallowness. Furthermore, Shelley holds that Sgricci is distinguished from other improvisatores because he has "a cultivated education and acquirements in languages rare among foreigners" (December 29, 1820; LMWS Vol. I. Bennett 171). Thus, an improvisatore seems to be appreciated in relation to how well he is cultivated. Hence, an improvisatore with less education or from a lower class would be less interesting. Likewise, as presented in my earlier chapter, Madame de Staël gives a rather unfavorable depiction of an improvisatore who improvises for Oswald and his wife when they are in Italy. The manner in which Madame de Staël's improvisatore practices his art seems to lack authenticity and integrity and suggests that he is from a lower economic background. Esterhammer explains, "Without a classical pedigree, the modern improvisatore might be a dilettante or demagogue—either practicing a useless rhetorical pastime that appealed only to the aristocracy, or else rousing the masses with charlatanism and spectacle." (Romanticism and Improvisation 60). Just like the religious prophet was regarded with suspiciousness because of his influence over

the masses, the professional improvisatore was also less appreciated or even mistrusted if his education lacked classical learning. In sum, the numerous descriptions that Shelley makes of Sgricci in her letters prove that she was interested in the figure of the improvisatore for his art.

Shelley's interest with Sgricci's improvisations shows her fascination with the study of the process of inspiration. In her letters about Sgricci, she uses language that conveys the divine to describe Sgricci's improvisations. On December 29 1820, on January 14 and again on January 21 1821, she uses the words "deity" and "God" to suggest that his creative outbursts are due to the fact that he is inspired by a God within him. This relates to Madame de Staël's Platonic definition of enthusiasm. Shelley describes his improvisations as "poetic extasies", which again carries the Platonic meaning of enthusiasm. In addition, she refers to his creativity as a "miracle", which means that she views Sgricci's performances as being out of the ordinary course of events (January 14 1821; LMWS Bennett 177). By judging Sgricci's performances as exceptional, it is evident that Shelley valued the art of improvisation and regarded it as being on par with printed poetry: "I am inclined to think that in the perfection in which he possesses this art it is by no means an inferior power to that of a *printed poet*—" (December 29th 1820; LMWS Vol. I, 171). Thus, Shelley's appreciation of the art of improvisation is similar to Madame de Staël's emphasis on a free-flowing thinking process rather than the rigidity of the printed word (De l'Allemagne II 65).[152] In 1835, when the second volume of Italian lives is published, she still expresses, in her short biography of Metastasio, her wonder with the art of improvisation, but her reading of the letters of Metastasio, who recounts his experience as an improvisator, leads her to slightly alter her view

[152] I have explained this idea in my earlier chapter.

and to conclude that this art form does not allow the poet to explore the full potential of his poetic talent. She writes:

> when the poet, instead of selecting and arranging his thoughts, and then using measure and rhyme as obedient executors of his designs, is obliged to employ the small time allowed him in collecting words, in which he afterwards clothes the ideas best fitted to these words, even though foreign to his theme: thus the former seeks at his ease for a dress fitted to his subject; while the latter, in haste and disturbance, must find a subject fitted to his dress. (Mary Shelley's Literary Lives: Volume 1. Italian Lives 211-212)

Thus, Shelley's notions of improvisation become more complex with time. In 1835, she is more inclined to value written over improvised poetry because she considers it as a more rewarding creative practice.

Another reason that Sgricci is so interesting to Shelley is due to the fact that during his improvisation he embodies an ideal state of enthusiasm that the mythical inspired poet was believed to have. This intense form of creativity is represented by Plato's description of the poet in "Ion" and by Madame de Staël in Corinne. Describing one of Sgricci's improvisations, Shelley writes in a letter to Leigh Hunt that there was "an unchanged deity who spoke within him" (December 29th 1820; LMWS Vol. I Bennett 171). Writing again to Clairmont on January 14th 1821, Shelley holds that Sgricci became "possessed of the truth" (LMWS Vol. I. Bennett 176). She thus sees the improvisatore as arriving at a Platonic state of 'truth' as a result of his inspiration. These direct allusions to Plato are an indication of Shelley's interest in enthusiasm. Shelley notes in her Journal that she copies out, from July 20 to August 6 1818, PBS's translation of Plato's Symposium (Journals Vol. I. 220-221). This shows how the

Shelleys had a common interest in Plato's theory of inspiration, and this is confirmed by the fact that PBS not only translated Plato's Symposium but also the Ion.[153] Moreover, the fact that she transcribes PBS's translation of Plato shows how the Shelleys were collaborating on many creative projects.[154] Apart from the Shelleys, there were other Romantic writers such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge who in "Kubla Khan" portrays a speaker who desires to experience the exaltation of the genius poet.[155] This suggests that Shelley was taking an active interest in defining the process of inspiration together with the Romantic poets.

Just as Madame de Staël links improvisation with prophecy in Corinne, Shelley also is fascinated by the idea that the art of improvisation can be a venue for prophecy. In another letter to Clairmont on January 21st 1821, Shelley relates the excellent manner in which Sgricci performed "the madness of Casssandra" and how delighted she was with his performance. She writes:

> I was extremely pleased with him he talked with delight of the inspiration he had experienced the night before, which bore him out of himself and filled him as they describe the Pythiness to have been filled with divine and tumultuous emotion—especially in the part where Cassandra prophesies he was as

[153] Percy's translation of Ion and The Symposium can be found in Notopoulos's The Platonism of Shelley.
[154] In "Collaborative Authorship and Shared Travel in History of A Six Weeks' Tour", Zoe Bolton argues that the Shelleys were collaborating in many of their creative projects.
[155] The poet represents the image of the genius poet in a state of inspiration:

> And all should cry, 'Beware, beware!
> His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
> Weave a circle around him thrice,
> And close your eyes in holy dread
> For he on honey-dew hath fed
> And drank the milk of paradise.' ("Kubla Khan" Lines: 49-54)

> overcome as she could (be) & he poured forth prophecy as if Apollo had also touched his lips with the oracular touch. (LMWS Vol. I Bennett 182)[156]

Shelley likens the wonder of Cassandra's prophecies with Sgricci's inspiration.[157] This reinforces the myth that the poet, or the good improviser, in his enthusiasm, has the ability to be inhabited and touched by divinity, so his poetry has the same status as that of the prophet's prophecies. The fact that she compares Sgricci's improvisation to a sibyl's prophecy shows a link that she makes between improvisation and prophecy, which is also to be found in Madame de Staël's Corinne.[158] By drawing attention to this performance of prophecy in her letters and in her essay, Shelley shows that she is particularly interested in the connection between prophecy and improvisation, which is also manifested to a certain extent in the depiction of Beatrice's prophecies and improvisatory-like talents in Valperga.

Although Shelley is fascinated by Sgricci's improvisations, she is concerned that his genius will not live for future generations because he is too invested in immediate reward. In "The English in Italy", she, once again, as in her letters, offers a flattering account of Sgricci's improvisations: "the words and poetry were his own, and we were continually startled by images of dazzling beauty, and a flow of language which never degenerated into mere words, but, on the contrary was instinct with energy and pathos" (158). However, as also expressed in her letter to Leigh Hunt, she laments the fact that the improviser's dazzling performances are

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[156] The interest that the Shelleys have for the act of inspiration as represented by the figure of Apollo is revealed in Shelley's correspondence. While in Rome, Shelley writes a letter to Marianne Hunt dated March 12th 1819, "We pass our days in viewing the divinest statues in the world…There is an Apollo—it is Shelleys favorite—in the museum of the Capitol he is standing leaning back with his feet crossed—one arm supports a lyre the other hand holds the instrument to play on it and his head is thrown back as he is in the act of being inspired and the expression of his countenance especially the lower part is more beautiful than you can imagine" (LMWS Vol. I. Bennett 88).

[157] In "The English in Italy", Shelley recounts that Sgricci related his experience that while he was on stage performing the "mad Cassandra" in "The Death of Hector", it was as if he had inhabited the role of the "prophetess" (158).

[158] In other words, Corinne prophecies her own end during her second improvisation.

ephemeral: "From all this magical creation of talent, what resulted? The poet himself forgets all his former imaginations, and is hurried on to create fresh imagery, while the effects of his former inspirations are borne away with the breath that uttered them, never again to be recalled" ("The English in Italy" 158). In other words, Shelley regrets that Sgricci's improvisations will not live to be experienced in the future because they are by their nature short-lived. Similarly, Caroline Gonda points out that "Mary Shelley in her essay, 'The English in Italy' (1826), directly addresses the evanescence of poetry." (202). In order to illustrate this tendency, Shelley once again links the figure of the Sibyl with the improvisatore by quoting a passage in Italian from Virgil's Aeneid, which Clemit translates as "Not does [the Sibyl] care to recover [the leaves'] places nor to unite the verses" ("The English in Italy" Note g; 158). Thus, she compares the transitory form of the art of improvisation with the lost leaves of the Sibyl's prophecies. She is amazed at Sgricci's genius but also at his carelessness in regard to the preservation of his poetry. Esterhammer's research has shown that critics were perplexed by the fact that improvisators did not use "their broad knowledge and evident talent for more productive pursuits" and concluded that "the drive for immediate gratification, in the form of both audience response and material reward, is essential to their creative enthusiasm" ("The Improviser's Disorder" 334). Esterhammer argues[159] that although Shelley admires the skill of Sgricci's improvisations, she deplores, like other critics of her time, that his art form is transitory. As already signaled by her attention to the fleeting nature of Sgricci's art-form, Shelley will later undertake the task of the preservation of her husband's poetic genius by becoming the editor of his poetry after his passing away.

[159] In "Improvisational Aesthetics", Esterhammer writes, "Despite her obvious admiration, Mary finally critiques Sgricci and the art-form he practices for their orientation toward immediate gratification" (par. 5).

Further evidence that Shelley was participating in the poetic theory of her time is by the fact that she shares her interest in Sgricci with her husband, PBS. As P.M.S. Dawson's research demonstrates, there is another proof that PBS has an interest in improvisation since he wrote in Italian a review of one of Sgricci's performances. In "Shelley and the Improvisatore Sgricci: An Unpublished Review", P.M.S. Dawson explains, "As practicing poets both Byron and Shelley took a professional interest in the Italian art of improvisation" (19). As her writings reveal, Shelley shared this professional interest with her husband. Furthermore, Dawson argues that "Shelley himself was an improviser of sorts, and would give extemporary commentaries on and translations of foreign works that interested him for the benefit of the members of his circle" (22). There is confirmation that PBS was a kind of improviser himself when he writes in his "Preface of "Hellas", "The poem of *Hellas*, written at the suggestion of the events of the moment, is a mere improvise" (446). He thus suggests that he experimented with the art of improvisation in his own writing. Similarly to Shelley, PBS's interest in Sgricci has to do with the idea that Sgricci embodies during his performances the perfect state of enthusiasm that inhabits the poet at the moment of his inspiration, as Plato discusses in Ion. In his review of Sgricci, PBS writes, "These strokes were not the poet's and it was rather a God who spoke in him, and created the ideas more rapidly than the human reason could ever have combined them" (Dawson 28). As with Shelley, PBS uses a Platonic understanding of a poet's inspiration to praise Sgricci's artistic execution. Gonda remarks, "the Shelleys' accounts of Sgricci link improvisation with *ekstasis*, being carried out of oneself." (203). This "*ekstasis*" recalls the poet being driven beside himself in Plato's Ion.

The motive that drives PBS's interest in the art of improvisation, in Plato's views on inspiration, and, accordingly, in Sgricci, is the delineation of his own definition of poetic

theory. Gonda writes, "Shelley's description of Sgricci parallels his remarks in the Defence of Poetry about poetry as the product of divine inspiration rather than human will." (202). Likewise, Clark writes, "The encounter with Sgricci seems to have been decisive in Shelley's conception of the unconscious, unintentional nature of creative processes" (The Theory of Inspiration 145). Dawson comes to a similar conclusion that "Indeed, it does not seem extravagant to claim that the *Defence* would have been a somewhat different work had Shelley not had the example of Sgricci presented to his attention" (31). As Gonda, Clark, and Dawson argue, Sgricci's performances played a major role in Percy's understanding of the conception of poetry. Moreover, the Shelleys saw him together perform *The death of Hector* on the 22nd January of 1821 (Dawson 20). The fact that Shelley also commented on the same performance given by Sgricci supports the idea that she too was invested in the theory of poetic inspiration. In relation to PBS's and Mary's observations on Sgricci, Esterhammer explains:

> The review is highly complimentary, ascribing Sgricci's talent to divine inspiration, noting its electrifying effect on the audience, and claiming that it 'surpassed perhaps all that Italy has ever known in this kind' (Dawson 27). Terms like 'inspiration', 'divine', 'magical', and 'miracle' are frequently used by both Mary and Percy; 'on the theatre he is as a god', Mary enthuses (Letters 1:165). ("Improvisational Aesthetics" par. 4)

As Esterhammer notes, both Mary and PBS applauded Sgricci's talent.[160] Thus, the fact that the Shelleys shared their interest in the art of improvisation and described Sgricci with the

[160] PBS describes, in his review, the effect that Sgricci's performance has on the audience. He writes, "Meanwhile the safest means of measuring the excellence of any dramatic poem, is the effect that it produces, and anyone who was present at the *academia* just described was a witness of the extent to which his heart was moved, his imagination exalted, and his reason satisfied" (Dawson 29). He is pointing out the enthusiasm that is communicated from the performer to the spectators, and this is similar to Corinne who also conveys her

same fervor shows how they both laid out the ideal characteristics that define a poet in a state of inspiration; consequently this displays the active involvement that Shelley took along with her husband in defining poetic theory in her letters, journals, and novels.

Just as Madame de Staël makes Corinne an Improvisatrice, Shelley portrays the talent for improvisational skill in several of her characters. One of these characters is the Italian *improvisatore*, Guarino, who although Shelley starts off by giving him positive characteristics, she soon overwhelmingly portrays him negatively. The fact that Shelley starts off by offering a favorable description of Guarino by describing him as having "entertaining qualities", the "fire of genius", and as being a "lover of nature" can also be understood by referring to Esterhammer's argument that in the Romantic era, improvisers serve as "embodiments of inspiration and genius" (Valperga 174 & Romanticism and Improvisation 78). Even though he is described as having the "fire of genius", he is also seen as being envious, dishonest, and evil (Valperga 174). This stands in contrast to the favorable depiction of the Improvisatore Sgricci in Shelley's letters. Consequently, by depicting the improvisator Guarino in Valperga as morally wrong and as despicable, she may be responding to some general suspicions about the integrity of improvisatores by critics in her era. As mentioned in my earlier chapter, Esterhammer argues that in the nineteenth century the improvisator was often represented as one "who transgresses normal social roles" ("The Improviser's disorder" 332). Esterhammer, however, speculates some possible additional reasons of Shelley's negative portrayal of Guarino. She questions whether the negative characterization does not reveal some doubts that Shelley had about Sgricci's integrity, or it may be, as Esterhammer says, that her views about Sgricci changed when she no longer was in touch with him ("Improvisational Aesthetics" par.

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enthusiasm to her audience. This shows how these writers were fascinated by the art of improvisation and how they linked it to the process of inspiration.

11). She speculates that Guarino may be a "caricature" of Sgricci ("Improvisational Aesthetics" par. 12). Esterhammer's conjectures certainly offer an explanation to the mystery of Shelley's unfavorable representation of Guarino since it stands in contrast to the ardent enthusiasm she displayed about Sgricci in real life. Moreover, Shelley's portrayal of Guarino as being envious and dishonest can also be linked to Esterhammer's explanation that the improvisatores' artistic inspiration was seen as being motivated by the need for "immediate gratification" that was provided by spectators' reactions and monetary recompense (Romanticism and Improvisation 174). Similarly, Guarino is portrayed as being manipulative and greedy, and driven by the money rather than by devotion to his art. Lisa Vargo argues, "Guarino's egocentric improvisations represent the wrongs of history to which Shelley offers an alternative model of inspiration as a force for liberation" (174). Indeed, just as Euthanasia opens her castle to all when she holds a court to entertain her people, the underlying message of the narrative is not the vanity that personal fame and glory can bring but the generosity of desiring the good of all. Guarino is described as being "eaten up by vanity and envy" and as using "wiles" (Valperga 174). Therefore, he is manipulative and scheming. He is also characterized as having a "serpent craft", which associates him with evil (Valperga 174).[161] He is very competitive with other entertainers. At Euthanasia's court, Guarino starts off his improvisation on a high theme—"the late war with Florence" (Valperga 181). He seems to follow a common improvisation pattern "from the hurry of battle, to the wailing for the dead, and then to the song of triumph" (Valperga 181). Madame de Staël's Corinne too seems to have an improvisational pattern by the fact that she bases her first improvisation on a national theme. For instance, in the first part of her first improvisation, she starts by addressing Italy,

[161] The word serpent connotes evil—from Genesis—

and then names great Italian poets, painters and thinkers, and, lastly, she addresses the beauties of Italy's natural landscape. Thus, it can be concluded that Shelley is already acquainted with the usual pattern that an improvisatore follows either because she has observed other improvisatores in Italy or because she has read accounts about them or because she is relying on her observations of Sgricci.

However, there were also some other entertainers present at Euthanasia's court who are described as being contemptible. The narrator says, "they were a nameless multitude, distinguished only for vulgar talents…by their supple and serpentine motions, strange gait, and motley habiliments; some being ragged from lack of wit, others from detected roguery, all regarding wit the eagerness of starved curs the riches of the castle, and the generosity of its mistress" (Valperga 175). Again, Shelley uses serpent imagery, which suggests that she associates these lower-class entertainers with evil and as preying on Euthanasia's riches. Therefore, Shelley, like Staël, seems to link lower-class entertainers, including *improvisators*, with dishonesty.

Another possible indication that the Shelleys were drawn to the art of improvisation for the purposes of their own creative writing is the poem "Orpheus". Pamela Clemit, the editor of Volume two of The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley includes the poem "Orpheus" in her edition even though it has been traditionally attributed to PBS. Clemit explains that her reason for including it in her edition is that there is speculation that the real author may have been Shelley rather than PBS or that it may be an instance of "joint authorship". In addition, various conjectures about the poem have been formulated. Two of these directly concern the Shelleys' interest in the art of improvisation. Clemit explains that it may be "a memorial reconstruction of an (unrecorded) performance by the improvisator Tommaso Sgricci during

the winter of 1820-21" (The Novels and selected Works of Mary Shelley Vol. 2 439). Another supposition, as Clemit informs, is that it may be "P.B. Shelley's attempt at improvisation with 'Mrs Shelley' as amanuensis" (The Novels and selected Works of Mary Shelley Vol.2 439). Although these are only hypotheses, they present exciting possibilities in the understanding that scholars have of the Shelleys' involvement with improvisation.

PBS's captivation with the art of improvisation is evident in "To a Skylark". The speaker of the poem says that the bird pours forth its song "In profuse strains of unpremeditated art" ("To A Skylark" line 5). The poet admires the bird for its capability to improvise its song without having to experience any blockages in its flow of inspiration. Its song comes from within it instantaneously; as a consequence, it represents, for PBS, an ideal state of creativity. The poet raves over the bird and the impulse that causes its song: "Teach me half the gladness / That thy brain must know, / Such harmonious madness / From my lips would flow" ("To A Skylark" lines 101-105). Again, this "madness" recalls Plato's description of the poet's state of enthusiasm in Ion. Likewise, Angela Leighton argues about "To a Skylark": "The instantaneous and heartfelt song of the bird is without premeditation or skill. The bird is thus the sublime poet *par excellence*; one who expresses 'the natural dictates of the heart, not fictitious or copied, but original', where originality serves as the antithesis of that creative delay occasioned by the human poet's recourse to skill or imitation" (Shelley and the Sublime 118). Leighton points out that it is the poet's ambition to achieve this ideal state of inspiration during the moment of composing his own poetry that drives his fascination with the bird. Leighton writes: "However, the poem is not really about the bird, but about the poet who addresses it…The distance between the bird and the poet is the distance between vision and expression, between inspiration and writing, which the poet's attempt to write only makes

more acute" (Shelley and the Sublime 118). It is this gap between being in an ideal state of inspiration and the actual writing of poetry that escapes the poet and problematizes him.

In addition to her admiration for Sgricci, Shelley is delighted by the performance of another artist, Nicolò Paganini[162] who was a great violin virtuoso in the first half of the nineteenth century. She records her astonishment at his performance in Rambles where she says "it had the power of an enchantment" and "no fabled power of music ever transcended his" (Journals note 1; 522; Rambles: 121). Another instance where she reveals the extent of her enthusiasm for his talent is in her Journals where she writes, "I heard Paganini today—he is divine—he had the effect of giving me hysterics—yet I could pass my life listening to him—nothing was ever so sublime" (Journals 522). After PBS's death, Shelley's tone is predominantly melancholic and sad in her Journals; however, her entry on Paganini's virtuosity is one exception where she exhibits excitement, which means that she remains deeply interested in the process of inspiration even after the passing of PBS. Similarly, in a letter to Maria Gisborne dated July 17 1834, she writes: "I delight in him more than I can express—his wild ethereal figure, rapt look—and the sounds that he draws from his violin are all superhuman" (MWSL Bennett Vol. II, 210). The fact that she refers to Paganini's mastery as "superhuman" conveys the idea that there is something extraordinary in his performance. Paul Griffiths writes that Paganini's "expertise, coupled with his cadaverous appearance, gave rise to many stories—notably that he had entered into a pact with the devil" (583). In much the same manner, Léon Guichard writes about Paganini:

> Mais que dire, ou ne pas dire des virtuoses ! Sur ses auditeurs saisis et transportés, c'est une véritable fascination qu'exerce Nicolo Paganini, un

[162] According to Feldman and Scott-Kilbert, Paganini "appeared for the first time in London on 3 June 1831 at the King's Theatre" (Journals note 1, 522).

> ensorcellement. Sa maigreur, ses longs cheveux noirs, son long nez crochu, ses longs doigts acrobatiques le faisaient comparer à un personnage d'Hoffman...Sa virtuosité paraissait diabolique. Le mystère, les légendes l'entouraient, les anecdotes couraient. (La musique et les lettres au temps du romantisme 81-82)

Moreover, it is suspected that his unusual flexibility that allowed him to perform on his violin techniques that seem unfeasible by anyone may have been because he had Marfan syndrome.[163] His audience, not knowing about this disorder, was simply dazzled by his genius. Jean Bernard Coudat writes "Son don anatomique spécial n'avait rien d'aussi exotique que le pied fourchu d'un diable ou l'aile d'un aigle; plutôt était-il la plus célèbre entité clinique appelé syndrome de Marfan" (2).[164] Esterhammer explains that the improviser was sometimes seen as being "unnaturally skillful" ("The Improviser's Disorder" 337). In light of Esterhammer's investigation, it can be inferred that Paganini's talent, like the improviser's skill, was perceived as almost 'unnatural'. Thus, like other writers of her time,[165] Shelley

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[163] I first became acquainted with this information by listening to Tom Allen on "Shift" on CBC radio 2.

[164] For more details about the conjecture that Paganini had Marfan syndrome see Coudat's Nicolò Paganini (1782-1840) Musicien, Magicien ou Mutan de Marfan?

[165] Leigh Hunt had also written a poem that conveys his fascination with Paganini. Eleanor M. Gates writes, "In the London Journal for April 16, 1834, Hunt had described the Italian violinist Paganini—

> The pale magician of the bow,
> Who wrought from Italy the tales, made true,
> Of Grecian lyres; and on his sphery hand,
> Loading the air with dumb expectancy,
> Suspended, ere it fell, a nation's breath. (Leigh Hunt: A Life in Letters 309)

Hunt uses the word "magician", which also conveys supernatural ability. In another instance, Hunt describes the effect that Paganini had on the audience:

> The house was so crammed, that, being among the squeezers in 'standing room' at the side of the pit, I happened to catch the first sight of his face through the arm akimbo of a man who was perched up before me, which made a kind of frame for it; and there, on the stage, in that frame, as through a perspective glass, were the face, bust, and raised hand, of the wonderful musician, with his instrument at his chin, just going to commence, and looking exactly as I have described him… To show the depth and identicalness of the impression which he made on everybody, foreign or native, an Italian who stood near me, said to himself, after a sigh, 'O Dio!' and this had not been said long, when another person in the same manner uttered the words, 'O Christ!' Musicians pressed forward from behind the scenes, to get as close to him as possible; and they could not sleep at night for thinking of him. (The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt 385-386)

participated in the discourses that surrounded the figure of the virtuoso artist. This is apparent in Valperga where the narrator recounts how there were rumors that Beatrice "was taught to sing by angelic instructors" (347). Just as Paganini's unusual talent was believed to have been given to him 'unnaturally', Shelley constructs her character whose beautiful singing seems to be out of the ordinary and transmitted to her through ethereal beings. Furthermore, the superlatives that Shelley uses with Paganini can be paralleled with the description she gives of Sgricci; therefore, it can be inferred that beyond her interest in the art of improvisation, she is very drawn by the transcendental dimension in art in general but also that she is emotionally moved by the witnessing of the transformation that the artist undergoes under a fit of mythical inspiration or enthusiasm descending upon the performer. The repetition of the word "hysterics" both in Rambles[166] and in her Journals to describe the emotion that she feels for Paganini's music reveals how the act of inspiration is perceived by her to be an emotional and physical experience. Likewise, the spiritual and physical are associated in Corinne where the heroine says, "Vous le voyez, je ne puis approcher d'aucun des sujets qui me touchent sans éprouver cette sorte d'ébranlement qui est la source de la beauté idéale dans les arts, de la religion dans les âmes solitaires, de la générosité dans les héros, du désintéressement parmi les hommes" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 85-86).[167] Similarly to Corinne, Shelley feels moved by

[166] Shelley writes, "Paganini excited and agitated violently—it was rather nervous hysterics than gentle sorrowing—it was irresistible"(Journals note 1,522; Rambles 121).

[167] Similarly, in Letters from Switzerland, Goethe maintains that inspiration that originates from the beautiful in nature or art leads him to experience bodily sensations. He writes, "A la vue d'un paysage peint ou dessiné, je me sens pris d'une inexprimable inquiétude. Dans ma chaussure, mes orteils tressaillent comme s'ils voulaient saisir la terre, mes doigts s'agitent convulsivement, je me mords les lèvres et, poliment ou impoliment, je tâche de me dérober à la société, je me jette face à la magnifique nature sur un siège incommode, je cherche à la saisir de mes yeux, à la pénétrer, et je barbouille en sa présence toute une petite feuille qui ne reproduit rien, et qui néanmoins garde pour moi une valeur infinie" (Goethe's letters from Switzerland 38). He feels a physical sensibility in the presence of natural or artistic landscape that leads him to the act of inspiration. His enthusiasm is translated in a physical sensibility that accompanies his experience of the beauty in nature and art and that

Paganini's art because it is associated with the act of inspiration and beauty. However beautiful are the performances of Sgricci and Paganini, they remain evanescent. Gonda draws attention to this point of comparison between the virtuoso musician and the improvisatore; she writes, "Like the performances of musical virtuosi in an age before sound recording, the improvisatore's art is 'both embodied and evanescent', a living art which dies away into silence." (208). Just as Shelley complained of the fleeting nature of Sgricci's art[168], Paganini's artistic genius cannot be recaptured.

Another artist for whom Shelley has a great fascination for is Giuditta Pasta, the famous Italian opera singer of the nineteenth century. Shelley is interested in the expression of enthusiasm conveyed in Pasta's singing that communicates passionate emotion to the audience. In one of her letters to Thomas Jefferson Hogg dated October 3 1824, Shelley writes about Pasta:

> I must except a few evenings at the Opera where I enjoyed an unexpected pleasure in Mad(me) Pasta. I saw her in Romeo. Joined to a graceful form, intellectual beauty of countenance, eyes of deep meaning and irristible sweetness, she possesses a fine voice & a talent for tragic acting which affected me as much as the Sir G.O. of Kean. She is not perhaps so great, I cannot entirely judge as I saw her only once, but though you may think this strange, her singing added to the pathos of her representation. She produced an electrical effect in the house & haunted my thoughts—even my dreams for several days. (LMWS Vol.I Bennett 449-450).

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pushes him to scribble down the scenery he views. Thus, there was this tendency for the Romantics to emphasize how the spiritual has an impact on the physical.

[168] P.158, "The English in Italy"

This "electrical effect" is also how PBS describes Sgricci's improvisation of the tragedy of the death of Hector. PBS writes concerning the madness of Cassandra: "The effect of this scene was astounding and highly dramatic…the very theatre was transformed to that which he (Sgricci) was representing, was in the highest style of tragic poetry and electrified the theatre" (Dawson 28). Dawson explains what the expression "electrified the theatre" meant for PBS: "The phrase is a dead metaphor now, but Shelley would have remembered the youthful experiments in which he passed an electric current through the linked circle of his brother and sisters, which was as apt an image as that used by Plato for the connection of poet and audience in a single circuit of feeling." (23) Indeed, it is this communication of passionate feeling that has its roots in Plato's theory of inspiration that Shelley is engrossed with. In another of her letters about Pasta's performance, Shelley writes to John Howard Paine on the 11th of June 1826:

> Absorbing interest in the acting & singing of this wonderful woman,—took us out of the world and surrounding people. We saw, heard, thought of nothing but Medea—Have you seen her at Paris yet? Have you heard her passionate tones, & beheld her thrilling countenance? Not given at all to demonstration in the way of sensibility, I was quite overcome, and in the scene with her children only by aid of salts and infinite struggle could prevent myself from making a scene for the edification of all around. Her eyes—her smiles, her look of unutterable woe! Her harmonious shrieks.—No paradox this—wilder and more terrible than any unmelodized expression of despair, might well cause rocks to weep and beast of prey to pity. (LMWS Vol. I Bennett 520)

Through her expression of Pasta's singing as causing "rocks to weep and beast of prey to pity", Shelley is, of course, referring to the myth of Orpheus, in which Orpheus has a great power to move emotions with his music—causing trees to be unrooted and wild beasts to become tamed. In relation to John Milton's poetry, Warren Chernaik explains that "In many poems, Milton uses the myth of Orpheus as exemplum of music's affective powers" (31). This idea is also true with Shelley who indirectly compares Pasta's singing and acting to Orpheus's music because of its ability to stir emotions. Moreover, in Lodore, Shelley reproduces this intense emotional experience that she had with Pasta's performance in her description of Ethel's feelings. The narrator says,

> Ethel had not been to the Opera, and now heard Pasta for the first time...Ethel listened with wrapt attention; her heart beat quick, and her eyes became suffused with tears which she could not suppress;—so she leant forward, shading her face as much as she could with her veil, and trying to forget the throng of strangers about her…Pasta's air was concluded; and she still turned aside, being too much agitated to wish to speak. (Lodore 174-175)

Shelley's shows how Pasta's interpretation causes deep emotions in Ethel. By reproducing the deep impression that Pasta's singing stirs, Shelley attempts to record the transient nature of a live performance in the first half of the nineteenth century. In The Sarah Siddons Audio Files: Romanticism and the Lost Voice, Judith Pascoe writes, "The longing for aural permanency that (Thomas) Edison claimed to satisfy with the phonograph was a longing that saturates the romantic culture more generally, and that links theatrical and poetic realms" (111). Indeed, the Romantics witnessed Pasta, Sgricci, Siddons and Paganini performing at a time when there was no existing technology to record their spoken and live performances. The only manner the

Romantics had to preserve a permanent record of a live performance was to offer a written account of it. This longing to retain the impression of a performance that has the qualities of intense inspiration is manifested in Shelley's reproduction of Pasta's singing in Lodore in the depiction Ethel's emotional reaction. It is interesting that Shelley chose to give in Lodore an account of Pasta's singing, in particular, because it would be Pasta who interpreted in 1825 in Rossini's Il viaggio a Reims the role of the improvisatrice Corinna, which was based on Madame de Staël's novel.[169] This may not be a complete coincidence because Shelley may have thought that Pasta's singing is comparable to the enthusiasm that Corinne's improvisation conveyed to her audience in Madame de Staël's novel.[170]

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[169] See The New Grove Dictionary of Music.

[170] In terms of what opera has in common with improvisation, it is worthwhile to note, as Susan Rutherford explains, that opera singers at the time when Madame Pasta was singing enjoyed a greater degree of "authority" about their performances (111). As Rutherford points out, this gave Madame Pasta a greater freedom to display her dramatic interpretation of her role with the creative passion she was inspired with. Rutherford writes,

> The economic development of the operatic marketplace depended on the production of works, the control of works, and the exploitation of works. The composer's ownership of the score was eventually established and protected by two strategies: by the introduction of copyright laws; and by a reduction of the singer's status from collaborator to subordinate—with the subsequent removal of the notion of a 'definitive performance, thereby ensuring the work was repeatable. (136)

Therefore, economic issues led to the need to ensure that the operatic composition was "repeatable" and safe from plagiarism, which means that the inspiration of the singer with its improvisatory-like elements was more controlled, eliminating, thus, the ephemeral nature of improvisation. Furthermore, Rutherford maintains that Stendhal's description of Madame Pasta's singing in Vie de Rossini points out the "histrionic possibilities and their effect on vocal intonation" and "the mutability of her performance strategies" (118). Indeed, in Vie de Rossini, Stendhal writes about Madame Pasta's singing: I

> Pour Madame Pasta, la même note dans deux situations de l'âme différentes n'est pas, pour ainsi dire, le même son. Voilà tout simplement le sublime de l'art du chant. J'ai vu trente représentations de Tancrède, et le chant de la cantatrice suit de si près les inspirations actuelles de son cœur, que je puis dire, par exemple, du *Tremar Tancredi*, que Madame Pasta l'a dit quelquefois avec la teinte d'une douce ironie ; d'autres jours, avec l'inflexion de l'homme brave, qui assure qu'il n'y a rien à redouter et qui engage à rassurer la personne qui a des craintes : quelquefois c'est une désagréable surprise déjà accompagnée de ressentiment, mais Tancrède songe que c'est Aménaïde qui parle, et la nuance de colère fait la place au sourire de la réconciliation. (315)

Therefore, the fact that Madame Pasta had the flexibility to subtly alter the dramatic expression of her singing by using a different inflection in her voice with every representation suggests an element of improvisation in her performances.

Furthermore, in her short biography of Metastasio, who was better known as an opera writer, Mary Shelley places an emphasis, as Vargo notes, on his brief career as an improvisatore ("Mary Shelley, *Corinne*, and 'the mantle of enthusiasm'" note 6, 176). Even though she describes him as being of "amiable disposition" and as having an "excellent character", she explains that it is unusual for people with genius to have a good character. In other words, she associates genius with "impetuosity" and "thoughtlessness" ("Metastasio" 210). Esterhammer states that impulsiveness was a characteristic often given to improvisatores in Romantic fiction ("The Improviser's Disorder" 335). Shelley maintains that Metastasio's success was a result of "the talents with which nature had endowed him" ("Metastasio" 210). The fact that Shelley links genius with natural talent relates to Esterhammer's explanation that the "discourse of improvisation …intersects in important ways with the Romantic image of the natural poetic genius." ("The Improviser's Disorder" 330). Shelley relates that even as a child, Metastasio displayed a talent for poetry by his improvisations ("Metastasio" 210). He stirred the interest of Vincenzo Gravina, a well-known lawyer with a love for poetry, who became his guardian and undertook his education ("Metastasio" 210). This started when one day the child was improvising to an audience in his father's shop and Gravino passed by ("Metastasio" 210). Upon noticing Gravino, the child "introduced some stanzas in his praise into his effusion" ("Metastasio" 210). This recalls Corinne who, upon seeing Oswald in the crowd of spectators, also changed the course of her improvisation to suit his melancholic mood. Thus, Shelley shows an awareness of one of the improviser's techniques, which is to modify the course of his improvisation to satisfy the audience's desires.

Quoting one of Metastasio's letters, Shelley draws attention to the belief that the practice of improvisation harms the improviser's health. Esterhammer shows that critics of the Romantic era considered that the art of improvisation endangered the improviser's health:

> The notion that poetic improvisation is an unnatural activity for the mind and the body derives, in part, from the great physical and neurological exertion it evidently requires. Observations of its effects on the performer, who is noted to be exhausted, enervated, or rendered physically ill by the performance, is a commonplace of eyewitness accounts of *improvisatori*". ("The Improviser's Disorder" 331)

Esterhammer cites Fernow who, in his biography of the poet, describes how Metastasio suffered the "detrimental physical effects of improvising" ("The Improviser's Disorder" 331). Fernow relates how the energy spent in a state of enthusiasm while improvising affected Metastasio's "nervous system", which led him to "utter exhaustion" ("The Improviser's Disorder" 331). Shelley shares this belief and brings attention to "the evils that result to the intellect perpetually bent on so exciting a proceeding" ("Metastasio" 212). She quotes a passage from Metastasio's letter where he explicitly mentions how his health was weakened because of the exertions that his performances of improvisation required; Metastasio states, "it was perceptible to every one that the agitation attendant on this exercise of mind, used to inflame my countenance and heat my head, while my hands and extremities became icy cold." ("Metastasio" 212). Thus, there is evidence that Shelley's conceptions of improvisation coincide with her contemporaries' view that the improviser's mental and physical welfare is jeopardized through his art.

In this short biography of Metastasio published in 1835, Shelley offers a definition of the art of improvisation. She writes:

> This attractive art renders the person who exercises it / the object of so much interest and admiration, that it is to be wondered that any one who has once practiced it, can ever give it up. The act of reciting the poetry that flows immediately to the lips is peculiarly animating: the declaimer warms, as he proceeds, with his own success; while the throng of words and ideas that present themselves, light up the eyes, and give an air of almost supernatural intelligence and fire to the countenance and person. The audience—at first curious, then pleased, and, at last, carried away by enthusiastic delight—feel an admiration and bestow plaudits, which, perhaps, no other display of human talent is capable of exciting. ("Metastasio" 211)

The details that she gives reveal the eyewitness observations and interest in improvisation that she had demonstrated for the Improvisatore Sgricci in the early 1820s. Tilar J. Mazzeo explains: "This description of the *improvisatore* is Mary Shelley's own and recalls some of her letters written in 1821 on the performance of Tommaso Sgriccci (1789-1836) at Pisa. The characterization, in particular, of the supernatural appearance of the inspired speaker is repeated in several of her letters (*MWSL* , I. pp.170-2, 180-2)." (Mary Shelley's Literary Lives: Volume 1. Italian Lives note c, 211). Indeed, this unnatural aspect of the improviser during the act improvisation indicates her interest in being in enthusiasm during the process of inspiration as described in Plato's Ion. Moreover, Shelley records in her Journal how she saw Gabriele Pasquale Giuseppe Rossetti perform one evening. She says, "Rosetti is there to improvisare one night" (Journals 515). The fact that she still records in 1830 that she saw an

improvisatore and later in 1835 places a special emphasis on Metastasio's brief experience as an improgvisatore is significant since it demonstrates her ongoing fascination with the art of improvisation and in the creative process, which had begun in collaborative study[171] with her husband through their acquaintance with Sgricci, through their reading of Madame de Staël's Corinne, and through their travels in Italy.

The Continuum of Improvisation

It can be argued that there exist different degrees of improvisation from the performance of the high cultured improvisatrice crowned at the Capitol—to the improvisation of the common people. In Shelley's writings, the presence of improvisation can be placed on a continuum in which the hymns, the songs, the canzones, and the song of lamentation represent different forms of extempore poetry. There is evidence that Shelley was interested in different kinds of improvisation. One such instance is in "The Parvenue", where she creates a peasant mother who improvises different stories for the instruction of her child: "She unfolded to me the wonders of the visible creation, and to each tale of bird or beast, of fiery mountain or vast river, was appended some moral, derived from her warm heart and ardent imagination" (267). The peasant mother who invents such tales is also an improviser of some sorts. Her "ardent imagination" links her to Corinne but also to Euthanasia and Beatrice who are also portrayed with the same characteristic.[172] Her improvised stories are intricately linked to nature, which plays an important part in teaching her child moral lessons. M.H. Abrams defines "The folktale" as "a short narrative in prose of unknown authorship which has been transmitted

[171] Zoe Bolton also argues how the Shelleys collaborated in many of their writings in "Collaborative Authorship and Shared Travel in *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*."
[172] For instance, Euthanasia is portrayed as having an "ardent yet tempered imagination" (Valperga 133). Also, it is Beatrice's "ardent imagination" that misleads her to assume that her love for Castruccio is divinely inspired (Valperga 230).

orally; many of these tales achieve written form" (105). The peasant mother's stories are in the tradition of the folktales that the common people would invent and transmit orally with an improvisatory twist in them. Indeed, Shelley's interest in folktales is also shared by PBS who documents in their joint journal five tales about ghosts recounted to them by M.G. Lewis (Journals 126-129). Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert note that "The fourth tale was also included at the end of Mary's essay 'On Ghosts'" (Journals note 3, 126). In addition, PBS notes in their Journal that Lewis "recited a poem" to the Princess of Wales who "was not only a believer in ghosts, but in magic & witchcraft, & asserted that prophecies made in her youth had been accomplished since" (126 Journals). This displays the interest that the Shelleys had in folklore in general. In other words, Percy was recording folklore in their journal during their travels for its improvisatory quality, which was material that the Shelleys were interested in exploring in their own creative writings. Moreover, folklore is important in Euthanasia's description of the Albinois in Shelley's Valperga:

> First, he has by heart, ready to quote on any suitable occasion, every prophecy that has been made since the time of Adam, and knows all the vulgar expositions of the sacred texts. Then he is an adept in the knowledge of sacred trees, fountains, and stones, the flight of birds, lucky and unlucky days; he has an extensive acquaintance with witches, astrologers, sorcerers and *tempestarii*…He interprets all the dreams of the castle, and foretells the point in time when to begin any enterprise: he has a wonderful assortment of holy legends and strange relics. (171 Valperga)

Folklore is a form of storytelling that is repeatedly reinvented and performed, which puts it on a continuum with improvisation. Another indication that Shelley uses folklore material is her

portrayal of the characters of the witch with her claims of magical powers and the Paterin old man who has medicinal knowledge and who restores Beatrice's health after her escape. Abrams explains the term Folklore:

> since the mid-nineteenth century, has been the collective name applied to sayings, verbal compositions, and social rituals that have been handed down solely, or at least primarily, by word of mouth and example rather than in written form. Folklore developed, and continues even now, in communities where few if any people can read or write. It also continues to flourish among literate populations, in form of oral jokes, stories, and varieties of wordplay…Folklore includes legends, superstitions, songs, tales, proverbs, riddles, spells, and nursery rhymes; pseudoscientific lore about the weather, plants, and animals; customary activities at births, marriages, and deaths; and traditional dances and forms of drama performed on holidays or at communal gatherings. Materials from folklore have at all times been employed in sophisticated literature. (104-105)

Thus, Shelley was adapting folklore in her writing because its versatility positions it on a continuum with improvisation.

Furthermore, Shelley pays attention to different kinds of songs that exist in the peasantry In "Letters Written in Geneva", the peasant songs which Shelley notices are most probably improvised. Shelley says:

> We have latterly enjoyed fine weather, and nothing is more pleasant than to listen to the evening song of vine dressers. They are all women, and most of them have harmonious although masculine voices. The theme of their ballads

> consists of shepherds, love, flocks and the sons of kings who fall in love with beautiful shepherdesses. Their tunes are monotonous, but it is sweet to hear them in the stillness of evening, while we are enjoying the sight of the setting sun, either from the hill behind our house or from the lake. (History of Six Weeks' Tour 47)

Although the theme of the peasant's songs remains the same, there is an element of improvisation in their performance since the ballads are most probably altered from one performer to another. Abrams explains that a ballad:

> is a song that is transmitted orally, which tells a story. Ballads are thus the narrative species of *folk songs*, which originate, and are communicated orally, among illiterate or only partly literate people…since each singer who learns and repeats an oral ballad is apt to introduce changes in both the text and the tune, it exists in many variant forms. (18).

Drawing from Abrams's explanation, it can be concluded that these evenings ballads have an element of improvisation since each time they are sung by the laborers, new elements are likely to be extemporarily introduced in them. In addition, the literary ballad was written, according to Abrams "in deliberate imitation of the form, language, and spirit of the traditional ballad" (19, 7th edition). By paying attention to these ballads sang by the peasants, Shelley indirectly shows her interest in the literary ballad, which was important to Romanticism. Nicholas Roe explains that in 1765, Thomas Percy published *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, which he believed to be the ballads of "ancient minstrels" (40). Roe further explains that although the ballad had been generally dismissed as "a lower-class poetic form" and "the product of folk culture", Thomas Percy's research played an important role in "ballad revival"

and in the conviction of "the power of primitive verse" at the end of the eighteenth century (40). This led poets to "experiment" with the ballad form in their poems (40). Roe points out that this "ballad revival" inspired Wordsworth and Coleridge to publish in 1798 Lyrical Ballads, a series of ballads they had written, which marked the beginning of Romanticism (40). Thus, the extempore quality of ballads had an impact in poetry writing in England during the Romantic era. As a result of this "ballad revival", Shelley's own participation in the poetic theory of her time was influenced.[173]

Shelleys's curiosity about the art of improvisation is equally apparent by the fact that she, in her essay "The English in Italy", offers information about a game that the Italian peasantry plays. The game consists of a peasant crying out and challenging another peasant with a name of a flower ("The English in Italy" 157). The other country dweller replies with an "extempore couplet" and then in his turn challenges the other by calling out another flower (157 "The English in Italy"). Shelley writes:

> One of the favorite games among the Tuscan peasants (we have forgotten the name of it), especially during the time of the vintage, is singularly poetic. A man on one tree, will challenge another perched afar off, calling out the name of a flower; the challenged responds with an extempore couplet, sometimes founded on the metaphoric meaning attached, of the flower's name, sometimes given at random, and then returns the challenge by naming another flower, which is replied to in the same manner. ("The English in Italy" 157)

[173] It is worth mentioning that in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", which appeared in Lyrical Ballads, S.T. Coleridge reflects the tradition of collecting early ballads by Thomas Percy. Coleridge uses material of ancient folklore and superstition to test the suspension of disbelief and the workings of the mind when one believes to be under the influence of a supernatural agency.

This suggests that the Shelleys showed a special interest and observed the details of different kinds of improvisations performed in Italy from the rural classes to the highly cultivated societies. Shelley even gives two examples of these "impromptus" poems which she writes in the Italian language. Pamela Clemit notes that "The impromptu is probably a *stornello*" (157). Abrams defines this type of improvised poetry of the common people as "Oral poetry". He explains that "Oral Poetry":

> is composed and transmitted by singers or reciters; from an early period, the recitations were sometimes accompanied by a harp or drum, or by other musical instruments. Its origins are prehistoric, yet it continues to flourish even now among populations which for the most part cannot read or write…There is no fixed version of an oral composition, since each performer tends to render it differently, and sometimes introduces differences between one performance and the next. Such poems, however, typically incorporate verbal formulas—set words, word patterns, refrains, and set-pieces of description—which help a performer to improvise a narrative or song on a given theme, and also to recall and repeat, although often without variations, a poem that has been learned from someone else. (208, 8th edition)

As Abrams suggests, oral poetry is practiced among the ordinary people in an extempore manner. In addition, when Euthanasia is about to depart on exile because Castruccio suspects her of treason, the narrator records in Italian the reply that a peasant gives to Euthanasia about the beauty of nature: "I could not refrain from recording in their original language the words of a Florentine peasant. A poet might well envy the vivacity of this man's imagination" (Valperga 435). Shelley's attentiveness in the peasant's improvisation is similar to the way

Madame de Staël, as mentioned in my chapter one, records the improvisation of the common people (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 83-84). Madame de Staël would write that the improvised farewell of the Sicilians is as if "poetry" was "the echo of nature" (Corinne Balayé ed. 1985, 84). This statement recalls Madame de Staël's fascination with the melodious language of Italians and with the manner it is suited for improvisation (De La Littérature 199). Thus, both Shelley and Madame de Staël show an interest in the extempore verses of the peasantry and link it to the transcendental found in nature. Overall, Shelley's observations of the oral poetry of the common people are evidence that she engages in dialogue with the poetic theory of the Romantic era.

Another evidence that Shelley was interested in different kinds of existing improvisations is that she depicts a scene in which Castruccio hires a mourner to lament the death of Beatrice. The narrator says that when Beatrice died, "the chamber was filled with mourning women; one, the chief, dressed in black, with disheveled hair, knelt near the head of the bier, and began the funeral song…the verses were extempore, and described the virtues and fortunes of the deceased" (Valperga 393). The narrator indicates that the mourners were hired, and they played their part in repeating and crying the refrain of the *cantatrice*. The funeral song can be placed on a continuum with improvisation by the fact that the verses were extempore. There is a great likelihood that this funeral song comes from Shelley's real life observation of different types of improvisations that she noticed when she was in Italy. The funeral song may be compared to *mirologia*[174]—songs of lamentation sang by women in Greece when a loved one dies; this custom may also exist in a similar form in Italy since the

[174] It is possible that Shelley had heard of M. C. Fauriel's The Songs of Greece, in which some *mirologia* were recorded. In the 1825 translated edition, Charles Brinsley, includes Fauriel notes, "Myriologues are extemporaneous effusions of grief, utter'd over the bier of a departed relative, usually by some female of the family" (The Songs of Greece 237).

two cultures have a lot in common. The Encyclopedia of Modern Greek Literature defines "*Mirologia*":

> The 'songs of death' (μοιρολόγια, a Byzantine word) are demotic laments, usually recited as funeral songs. Perhaps their lineage is as ancient as Homer, *Illiad* XXIV, 719ff…The laments were chiefly a womanly art and could consist of elaborate poems or 'tuneful weeping' (HolstWarhaft). Some were recited by paid female mourners and others by a relative of the loved one at the wake. (273)

The fact that the *cantatrice* and the mourners are paid by Castruccio indicates that this type of Italian improvised song can be likened to how some mourners were hired to improvise a song in the tradition of *mirologia* in Greece. Thus, her portrayal of the funeral song ordered by Castruccio is in all likelihood based on her own observations of Italian extempore song. Moreover, Castruccio directs to a certain extent the subject of the *cantatrice*'s funeral song (Valperga 394). Giving instructions to the mourner about her song is an indication that Shelley was aware of different subtleties that existed in different types of improvisations. Thus, just as the improvisatore is given a subject to improvise upon, so did Castruccio give the theme of the mourning song to the *Cantatrice*. Furthermore, as Esterhammer argues[175] and as seen in Corinne, the subject of improvisation is often given to the improvisatore by the audience. However, in "The English in Italy", Mary Shelley observes another practice which is different from giving to the improvisatore the subject of improvisation orally. She mentions that it was usual to give the subject of improvisation written on a small piece of paper and to leave it outside at the entrance of the theater ("The English in Italy" 158). These kinds of details about

[175] "The Improviser's Disorder" p. 330.

the manner that the improvisation was directed show how attentive Shelley was to the art form of improvisation.

When Euthanasia holds her court in her castle of Valperga, she invites a multitude of entertainers which suggest that Shelley places improvisation on a continuum with other performing arts. Shelley writes, "Then arrived a multitude of *Uomini di Corte*; story-tellers, *improvisatori*,[176] musicians, singers, actors, rope-dancers, jugglers and buffoons" (Valperga 173). This shows how Euthanasia's court embraces the artistic and the theatrical. She sets up laws that bear a resemblance with theatrical directives in order to entertain and please her court: "Euthanasia issued forth the laws for their amusements on the occasion" (Valperga 175). She spends time and money to entertain her court and her people; therefore, just like Corinne, she embraces beauty and art. Shelley also draws attention to other forms of performing arts that were present in Euthanasia's court such as "mimes" and "antic pantomimes of the day" (Valperga 187). The narrator writes, "No nation can excel the Italians in the expression of passion by the language of gesture alone, or in the talent of extemporarily giving words to a series of action which they intend to represent" (Valperga 187). The description of this talent comes close to the commedia dell'arte:

> A form of comic drama, the commedia dell'arte originated in Italy about the middle of the sixteenth century. Guilds of professional actors, portraying stock characters, performed standard scenarios in which the dialogue was largely improvised. (World Literature and Its Times 28)

[176] Tilottama Rajan notes that by mentioning improvisatori, "Shelley may have in mind Germaine de Staël's Corinne (Valperga note 73; 454).

Esterhammer maintains that carnivals and commedia dell'arte are crucial factors in the growth of improvisation.[177] Drawing from Esterhammer discussion, it can thus be inferred that by being aware not only of improvisators but also of mimes and pantomimes, Shelley shows an ethnological interest in these alternative improvisatory art-forms. This sense is also apparent in Lodore, where the Italian Clorinda is described as "too pantomimely expressive, so to speak, not to impress disagreeably one accustomed to the composure of the English" (Lodore 260). The narrator's portrayal of Clorinda recalls Corinne whose artistically expressive temperament is at odds with the customs of English small town society (Corinne "Livre XIV Histoire de Corinne").

Another indication that in Shelley's writings there is the presence of a continuum of improvisation is by the fact that although Euthanasia and Beatrice in Valperga may not be *improvisatrices*, they both display some improvisational talent. Euthanasia is described as having a "flowing yet mild eloquence" and an "ardent yet tempered imagination" (Valperga 133). Through these qualities, Euthanasia can be likened to Corinne by the fact that she is expressive and creative, but it is important to notice how her eloquence is qualified as being "mild" not outpouring and that her "imagination" is "ardent" yet "tempered". This emphasis on restraint recalls William Godwin's emphasis on reason against emotion in Political Justice. The narrator asks, "who could sing the *canzones* of those times, or relate a pathetic tale like Euthanasia?" (Valperga 134). This associates her to Corinne[178]—her ability with words—and with extempore composition. She also loved to sing the poetry of renowned classical poets

[177] See Chapter 7 in Romanticism and Improvisation.

[178] One of Euthanasia's enthusiastic speeches about Rome resembles Corinne's style of improvisation through her apostrophe: "Thou, oh! Tiber, ever rollest, ever and for ever the same! Yet are not thy waters those which flowed here when the Scipios and the Fabii lived on thy shores; the grass and the herbage which adorn thy banks have many thousand times been renewed since it was pressed on by their feet; all is changed, even thou are not the same!" (Valperga 149).

such as Guido and Dante, which links her with a poetic tradition that is similar to Corinne, who pays tribute to Italian poets in her first improvisation (Valperga 143). In addition to Euthanasia, Shelley portrays in "Euphrasia: A Tale of Greece" a character who also has improvisational abilities. Euphrasia both resembles Corinne and Euthanasia by her love of literature and liberty. Shelley writes about Euphrasia: "By nature she was an enthusiast, and a poet. The study of the classic literature of her country corrected her taste and exalted her love of the beautiful. While a child she improvised passionate songs of liberty" ("Euphrasia" 302). Despite her improvised songs of liberty, Shelley portrays Euphrasia dying as a victim of a foreign ruler who enslaves her country. Thus, Shelley closely links love of liberty and improvisational talent in both Euthanasia and Euphrasia.

Another character who has improvisational skills in Valperga is Beatrice. The Bishop recounts that "she would sing extempore hymns with wild, sweet melody" (Valperga 211). Her skill for extempore religious poetry, the hymns, can also be placed on a continuum with extempore poetry and recalls Corinne's improvisations. Kari E. Lokke also finds similarities between the character of Beatrice and Madame de Staël's Corinne. Lokke writes, "A young prophetess or *Ancilla Dei* who believes in her own divine inspiration, Beatrice is also Shelley's rewriting of the character of Corinne….Like Corinne, she is capable of extemporaneous eloquence and ecstasy" ("The Sweet Reward of our Toil" 66). Moreover, at another level, Beatrice's delirium when under the effect of the drug that the witch gives her can be linked to what PBS said in relation to the nature of the poet. PBS writes to Maria and John Gisbourne on the 13th of July 1821: "Poets the best of them, are a very chameleonic race: they take the colour not only of what they feed on, but of the very leaves under which they pass" (LPBS Vol. II Jones 308). In relation to this letter, Duncan Wu points out, "this is close

to Keats's notion of negative capability, which also uses the metaphor of the chameleon" (Romanticism: An Anthology note 27, 1190). Thus, Beatrice also possesses this chameleonic-like capability by the fact that she becomes totally entranced by her chanting of the witch's spell to bring Castruccio to her, and this is also evident by her earlier beliefs in her prophecies and her performance as a prophetess.[179] In other words, her "chameleonic" propensity predisposes her to her career as prophetess.

In addition to Euthanasia and Beatrice, Shelley gives improvisatory-like qualities to Madame de Staël herself. In her short biography of Madame de Staël, Shelley not only portrays Madame de Staël as an improvisatrice, but also depicts her with characteristics that were used to describe the personality of improvisators. This is not surprising since there exists a painting by Madame Vigée Le Brun, in which there is Madame de Staël posing as Corinne improvising on her lyre.[180] She admires Madame de Staël for her works, but she also criticizes her at times. Although she praises Madame de Staël's Dix années d'éxil, she says that "Generally speaking, there is exaggeration and traces of false sentiments in her writings" ("Madame de Staël" 483). These shortcomings recall the negative description that Shelley gives to the improvisator Guarino in Valperga. She also explains how Madame de Staël became really melancholic when she did not have the excitement of Parisian society to stimulate her. The fact that she quotes "Goldsmith's lines on French society" proves that at times Shelley does not offer a very flattering portrait of Madame de Staël's tendency to become distressed and bored when being away from the conversations and life of Parisian society. She quotes:

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[179] Beatrice's nervous disposition can be related to Esterhammer's argument that the improviser is fatigued and neurologically strained after the act of improvisation (Romanticism and Improvisation 207).
[180] Angelica Goodden writes, "In 1807 Staël sat to Vigée Le Brun, who wanted to depict her as a declaiming Corinne" (The Dangerous Exile 165).

For praise too warmly loved, or dearly sought,

Enfeebles all internal strength of thought;

And the weak soul, within itself unblest,

Leans for all pleasure on another's breast. ("Madame de Staël" 485)

Shelley's disapproval of the way that Madame de Staël revels for fame recalls her criticism of Sgricci's similar inclination. In order to emphasize how Madame de Staël can be likened to an Improvisatrice, Shelley recounts how as children Madame de Staël and her friend, "dressed themselves like muses; they composed poetry, and declaimed it; they wrote and acted plays" ("Madame de Staël" 460). Thus, Shelley shows how Madame de Staël had from a young age an interest in artistic performance and in writing, which led to Shelley's own portrayal of Madame de Staël as an improvisatrice. However, the fact that Shelley recounts how Madame de Staël played the role of a muse is significant because it shows how attentive Shelley is to the author's theory of inspiration and to her depiction of Corinne's enthusiasm. This is obvious by the fact that Shelley particularly admires Madame de Staël's treatment of "enthusiasm" in De l'Allemagne. She writes that "her 'Germany,' perhaps, deserves the highest rank, from its research, and the great beauty of its concluding chapters" ("Madame de Staël" 493). Here, the "concluding chapters" refer to Madame de Staël's chapters on "enthusiasm" ("Madame de Staël" 493). This shows that Shelley esteems and is acquainted with Madame de Staël's definition and contributions to the subject of enthusiasm. The fact that Shelley quotes a description of Madame de Staël given by comte de Guibert Hippolyte that depicts her as someone who is able to declaim on a variety of subjects and who "extemporized the words of her song" reinforces Shelley's own representation of Madame de Staël as an improvisatrice ("Madame de Staël" 465). Another indication that Shelley likens Madame de Staël to an

improvisatrice is that she recounts how Madame de Staël's mother force-fed her education with many facts, which, it can be inferred, prepared her to perform extempore on many topics that an audience may ask ("Madame de Staël" 458). Moreover, Shelley offers praise mixed with criticism concerning Madame de Staël's philosophic writings—she argues that there is lack of profundity in her works:

> She wrote on a vast variety of subjects, and threw light on all. Yet she / gathered her knowledge, not by profound study, but by rapid dipping into books and by conversation with learned men; thus her opinions are often wrongly grounded, and her learning is superficial. Still her conclusions are often admirable, granting that the ground on which she founds them is true. ("Madame de Staël 493)

Thus, Shelley draws attention to how there is an element of improvisation in Madame de Staël's writings since she does not commit herself to serious study but draws from conversations she has with intellectuals and her own hasty research in books; she is like Corinne, an improvisatice who writes. This portrait resembles the depiction that Shelley gives of the improvisatore Sgricci whom she criticizes for not "studying for posterity",[181] but it also echoes prominent depictions of improvisators as being "superficial" and motivated by "immediate gratification" (Esterhammer "The Improviser's Disorder" 333 & 334). To sum up, Esterhammer has pointed out in her research the negative characteristics with which critics characterized improvisatores in the Romantic era. It is probable that Shelley was aware of these unfavourable traits given to improvisators since she herself attributes similar faults to Madame de Staël as she likens her to an improvisatrice.

[181] LMWS Vol.I Bennett 165.

Shelley proposes that Madame de Staël outgrows her improvisatrice-like manners as she matures. She thus implies that the persona of the improvisatrice is transitory in the development of a woman's identity. Commenting once more on Madame de Staël's writings, Shelley says that as the author aged "she acquired greater truth and energy in her writings" ("Madame de Staël 491). She explains:

> This may often be observed with women. When young, they are open to such cruel attacks, every step they take in public may bring with it irreparable injury to their private affections, to their delicacy, to their dearest prospects. As years are added they gather courage; they feel the earth grow steadier under their steps; they depend less on others, and their moral worth increases. ("Madame de Staël 492)

The editor Clarissa Campbell argues that this echoes "Mary Shelley's own self-analysis in Oct. 1838: 'And as I grow older I grow more fearless for myself—I become firmer in my opinions'" (MWSJ, II, 557 note a; 492). The persona of the Improvisatrice is also apparent in Cornelia's love for social attention in Lodore. The narrator describes Cornelia's love for social success: "she became more than ever the fashion, and years glided on, as from season to season she shone a bright star among many luminaries, improving in charms and grace, as knowledge of the world and the desire of pleasing were added to her natural attractions" (Lodore 136). Cornelia's social fame resembles Shelley's portrayal of the superficiality of Madame de Staël's love of society in "Madame de Staël". However, Cornelia sheds off this improvisatrice personality as she rediscovers her love for her daughter that fills her with a disinterested enthusiasm, which leads her to seek obscurity and self-sacrifice for Ethel's sake and happiness. For Shelley, the persona of the *Improvisatrice* is thus fragile as if in an

experimental phase in which a woman learns to perform her womanhood. Shelley implies that as a woman matures, however, she sheds off this persona and acquires more authority and greater integrity in her thinking because, being more experienced, she is less dependent on the approval of her feminine identity.

This chapter on improvisation presented how Shelley together with PBS participated in the poetic theory of her time. Her passion for improvisation can be explained by the fact that she is fascinated by the inspired state of the poet during the performance of improvisation. Her interest in this ideal inspired state of the poet is apparent by her descriptions of Sgricci, Paganini, and of her portrayals of Euthanasia and Beatrice in Valperga. However, she somewhat qualifies this great appeal that she has for the art of improvisation through some of the pitfalls that she identifies with Sgicci. Moreover, some of the negative characteristics that she gives to Madame de Staël, whom, I have argued, she compares to an improvisatrice in Literary Lives, show that she was participating in dialogues about the art of improvisation during the Romantic era.

Mary Shelley's Aesthetics and Cosmology

In this chapter, I will explore how aesthetics and cosmology are linked in Mary Shelley's writings. First of all, I will analyze how Shelley represents the Alps in The Last Man by drawing insight from her travel writings and Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Mont Blanc" and his reactions to the landscape of the Alps as made evident in his letters but also in his shared Journal with Shelley and their co-authored History of Six Week's Tour. In order to understand Lionel's and Adrian's enthrallment at the view of the Alps, I will trace how Shelley enters in dialogue with literary discourses that demonstrate a connection between enthusiasm and the sublime. In the second part of my chapter, I will turn my attention to a discussion of how Pythagorean cosmology can be useful in understanding Shelley's notion of universal harmony. Furthermore, I will explain how the notion of the music of the spheres is complicated by Necessity. The role of Necessity can be interpreted in several ways in the novel, among which are its association with mere chaos, predestination, and freedom. In addition, I will explore the notion of Time in relation to transience and eternity. Finally, the Sibyl's prophecy in The Last Man does not carry all the expectations of the apocalyptic genre; therefore, Lionel compensates for it by adding natural catastrophes to his own foretelling of what will occur when future readers will read his account. Overall, I will be arguing that the notions of the sublime, Necessity, prophecy and Time in Shelley can be better understood by taking into account her view of cosmology.

Moreover, I will analyze how Shelley responds to her husband's poetry and poetic theory in her writings. This is not to say that Shelley is a less important writer than PBS but rather that she too was participating with him in the poetic theory of the Romantic era. What is unique about studying the Shelleys is that, through their shared Journal, they left us with an

insight into their creative process. Zoe Bolton's argument in "Collaborative Authorship and Shared Travel in History of Six Weeks's Tour" is important for my own chapter because she views the Shelleys as retaining their collaborative creative writing relationship beyond History. Indeed, by responding to PBS's poetry and poetic theory, Shelley retains their collaborative relationship beyond History. Bolton indicates that the Shelleys travelled to Chamounix in order "to experience the sublimity of the Alps" with the wish that the landscape would "stimulate creativity" (12). For the Shelleys, Bolton writes, "collaborative writing is a creative means of documenting their togetherness." (17). As I will argue in this chapter, this 'togetherness' and 'intimacy' is what Mary Shelley revisits in rewriting the scenes concerning the Alps. I will present how she draws on those travels and intimate experiences that she shared with Shelley in order to reconstruct the scene with the Alps. Speaking about the "compositional context" of the Journal, Bolton maintains that "joint participation in travel" results in a "compositional practice" that prospers on "collaborative creativity" (19). The Journal will prove useful since they will have recourse to it for their later creative writing (Bolton 19). Concerning Percy's choice to include his "Mont Blanc" in their travelogue, Bolton writes, "The context of *History* roots the poem's existential and philosophical explorations in a specific place and set of circumstances that the tourist can re-experience." (19-20). I will show that Shelley re-explores these "existential" and "philosophical" issues through the questions about the meaning of life that torment the characters in The Last Man. Bolton maintains that because 'Mont Blanc' emerges out of the Journal and in a "collaborative context", it leads to "an alternative reading of the text: a reading which recognizes that his major poem is not an entirely metaphysical and individual response to an imagined sublime landscape, but a geographically rooted poetic account of a direct and shared experience of an

actual place." (23). I will argue that this "geographically rooted poetic account" is one that Shelley accompanies with a Pythagorean cosmology in The Last Man. Bolton considers that "her later editing of his (PBS's) works and crafting of his posthumous reputation perpetuate such a collaborative relationship even after his death." (23-24). Indeed, the fact that she re-depicts the scenes of 'Mont Blanc' is evidence that she yearned to retain even after his death their collaborative travel and writings experiences that were so meaningful to her since they represent also their closeness. The scenes of the Alps, depicted in The Last Man, constitute a profoundly intimate experience that she shared with her husband. This is mutual since PBS experiences the sublime in composing 'Mont Blanc', as Bolton suggests, in an intimate context with Shelley. In addition, Bolton writes, "As authors, they continue, with varying levels of intensity, to participate actively in and respond to one another's literary output for the whole of their writing lives." (24). She evidently does allude to PBS's writings and ideas in The Last Man as well as in her other novels as my chapters on Shelley will confirm.

The analysis that I present about Shelley's treatment of the Alps slightly diverges from other scholars of Romanticism. My argument is that Shelley responds but also expands on PBS's poetic and existential questions. Furthermore, in the first part of my chapter, I maintain that the Alps have a healing impact on the wearied spirits of the remaining survivors in The Last Man. This is different from Françoise Dufour in "Les Alpes vues par Mary Shelley et les peintres de son temps" and from Morton D. Paley in "*The Last Man* Apocalypse Without Millennium". In relation to Shelley's response to PBS's poetics, Paley argues, "Ultimately *The Last Man* is a repudiation of what might simplistically be termed the Romantic ethos as represented, for example, in the poetics and politics of Percy Bysshe Shelley." (111). In

contrast, I will demonstrate that Shelley does not reject her husband's Romantic ideals but rather revisits and builds upon them. Moreover, Dufour writes:

> Chez Mary Shelley, le voyage vers les cimes n'apporte pas le salut ou la révélation : loin de trouver le repos, l'homme n'éprouve qu'un allègement passager de ses souffrances grâce à l'expérience de la beauté qui laisse entrevoir une lueur d'espoir et un bonheur encore possible. Cependant cette perception fugace est trompeuse et l'espoir déçu rend le retour au réel encore plus douloureux. (61-62)

Although I agree with Dufour that relief from the emotional pain that they experience at the foot of the Alps is only temporary, it is still a valid experience.

In the second part of my chapter, I will be discussing how Haydn's The Creation in the novel completes the idea that the remaining humans left on earth experience healing at the foot of the Alps through the beauty and sublimity of the landscape but also through the music. My position somewhat differs from Lucy Morrison in "Listen While You Read: The Case of Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*". In contrast to both Morrison and Paley, I believe that the piece "new-created world" from Haydn's Creation refers to a cosmology that both the music and the Alps represent. Morrison argues that Shelley's reference to a new healed world in Haydn's Creation is "brutally ironic" because "no new world can be created if there is no-one left to create it—and, by the end of Mary Shelley's text, no God left to inspire it" (158-159). Similarly, Paley maintains that the piece "new-created world" that Shelley mentions in the narrative is a "a cruel joke by the author upon the reader" because right after overhearing the music, Lionel relates that the girl who was performing it to her blind father falls dead due to the plague, while her father has the same fate shortly after (119). Although I do see the validity

of both Morrison and Paley's arguments, my perspective is that the music being played not only brings temporary solace to the minds of the remaining humans but is also linked to a certain cosmology.

Enthusiasm can be linked with the sublime in Mary Shelley's portrayal of the Alps in The Last Man.[182] In the novel, Adrian and Lionel together with the remaining humans left with them decide to go to Switzerland—or more precisely to the Alps to escape the plague and find health. After seeing the beauty of Lake of Geneva both Adrian and Lionel as well as the group of humans that remain feel "the intoxicating effect of this wonder of nature" and an "enthusiastic transport, akin to happiness" (The Last Man 327). When in view of the Alps, Adrian is one of the firsts to be struck by an enthusiastic emotion that is linked to the sublime: "Adrian had gone first…He seemed to behold something unexpected and wonderful; for, pausing, his head stretched out, his arms for a moment extended, he seemed to give an All Hail! To some new vision" (The Last Man 327). In this scene, Adrian's emotion of reverence is due to the beauty of the Lake of Geneva, but his awe is also because of the experience of the sublime that he has in view of the mountains. Adrian's enthusiasm for the Alps is very similar

[182] Although the focus of my chapter is aesthetic, Moskal makes an excellent point by arguing that the Shelleys' emphasis on the sublimity of Mont Blanc in History is because it outlasts the destructive power of Napoleon ("Travel Writing" 244). In order to emphasize this, Moskal explains that at first Mary Shelley presents the ravages caused by Napoleon's regime in the book before turning to the sublimity of the Alps ("Travel Writing" 244). Moskal writes:

> The fact that this joint effort closes with a celebration of unshakable natural power contrasts starkly with the view of Napoleon's shattered political power that opens the book. The defeated Napoleon had abdicated and gone into exile in April 1814, just a few months before the Shelley party's visit. Mary Shelley worries how the victors will treat Paris (*NSW* viii 18), laments the Cossacks' ransacking a small French town (21), and records that a Frenchwoman warned her of the danger of rape by Napoleon's demobilized soldiers (19). In the interim between the Shelley party's trips, Napoleon returned to power for the so-called "Hundred Days", a phoenix-like return that resulted in his defeat at Waterloo in 1815 and a second, permanent, exile. The writing of the second journey engages this political defeat philosophically and aesthetically, as the Shelleys focus on the forms of sublimity and power that outlast Napoleon: the literary genius of Rousseau and the natural sublimity of Lake Geneva and Mont Blanc. ("Travel Writing" 244)

to PBS's account of the feelings of wonder that he experiences in presence of the landscape and that he expressed in a letter:

> "I do not err in conceiving that you are interested in details of all that is majestic or beautiful in nature; but how shall I describe to you the scenes by which I am now surrounded? To exhaust the epithets which express the astonishment and the admiration—the very excess of satisfied astonishment, where expectation scarcely acknowledged any boundary, is this, to impress upon your mind the images which fill mine now even till it overflow?" (The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley 220).

In this letter, PBS repeats the word "astonishment" twice, which echoes Burke's definition of the sublime. Burke writes, "The passion caused by the great and sublime in *nature*, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror" (101). This suspension of all other sensations in face of the sublime is what Adrian experiences upon accosting the Alps. In his Critique of Judgment, Immanuel Kant would build upon Burke's elucidation by further distinguishing between the sublime and the beautiful.[183] Kant explains the difference between the beautiful and the sublime:

> The two likings are also very different in kind. For the one liking ([that for] the beautiful) carries with it directly a feeling of life's being furthered, and hence is compatible with charms and with an imagination at play. But the other liking (the feeling of the sublime) is a pleasure that arises only indirectly: it is

[183] The editors of The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism explain that Kant's Critique of Judgment is a reaction and further analysis of previous work done on "nature, beauty and taste" by previous philosophers such as Edmund Burke and David Hume (499).

> produced by a feeling of a momentary inhibition of the vital forces followed immediately by an outpouring of them that is all stronger. Hence it is an emotion, and so it seems to be seriousness, rather than play, in the imagination's activity…the mind is not just attracted by the object but is alternatively always repelled as well, the liking for the sublime contains not so much a positive pleasure as rather admiration and respect, and so should be called a negative pleasure. (98)

The reverential feelings felt by Adrian upon encountering the Alps can be paralleled with Kant's notion of "negative pleasure" or sentiments of "admiration and respect" upon encountering the sublime. Yet, there is the suggestion that Adrian is moved not only by the scenery's sublimity but also by its incredible beauty. Thus, because Adrian's experience of the sublime seems intermixed with the beautiful, Wordsworth's elucidation of the sublime can, in addition, be helpful in understanding his reaction:

> "I need not observe to persons at all conversant in these speculations that I take for granted that the same object may be both sublime and beautiful; or, speaking more accurately, that it may have the power of affecting us both with the sense of beauty & the sense of sublimity; tho' (as for such Readers I need not add) the mind cannot be affected by both these sensations at the same time, for they are not only different from, but opposite to, each other" ("The Sublime and the Beautiful" 349).

Despite the fact that Wordsworth is saying that the mind cannot experience both the beautiful and the sublime simultaneously, his explanation that a site can be both sublime and beautiful

at once is useful in allowing readers to grasp Adrian's perception of the mountains.[184] & [185] Shelley also treats of the Alps in her earlier novel Frankenstein. Indeed, Frankenstein says that when he first encountered the "ever-moving glacier", he felt "sublime ecstasy that gave wings to the soul, and allowed it to soar from the obscure world to light and joy. The sight of the awful and majestic in nature had indeed always the effect of solemnizing my mind, and causing me to forget the passing cares of life" (Frankenstein 92). Apart from the fact that the "awful and majestic in nature" echoes Burke's definition of the sublime[186], this passage shows how Shelley had dealt with the sublime in connection with enthusiasm even earlier in her writing career.

The scenes in the Alps both in Frankenstein and in The Last Man are intimately tied to her travels in the Alps with PBS, which are recorded in their collaborative work History of Six Weeks' Tour. In this travel narrative, PBS, in a letter, describes the experience he had upon viewing Mont Blanc: "I never knew—I never imagined what mountains were before. The immensity of these aerial summits excited, when they suddenly burst upon the sight, a sentiment of extatic wonder, not unallied to madness" (History of Six Weeks' Tour 151-152). Percy's enthusiasm is here linked to the experience of the sublime that he has in presence of Mont Blanc. The ecstatic sentiment approaching madness not only recalls Plato's theory of inspiration but also is presumably what PBS must have felt as he was writing his poem 'Mont Blanc'. It is important to emphasize these scenes because of the tremendous discourse concerning the Alps and the sublime in the Romantic period. In her important study Mountain

[184] Nicolson explains that Shaftesbury "made no sharp distinction" between the sublime and beautiful. She says that "to him the Sublime was a higher and a grander Beauty" ("Sublime in External Nature" 334). Similarly, Adrian seems to respond both to the beauty and the sublimity of the landscape of the Alps.
[185] However, Madame de Staël seems to make a clear distinction between the sublime and the beautiful. For instance, at the view of St-Peter's Corinne says, "On arrive point au sublime par degrés; des distances infinies le séparent même de ce qui n'est que beau" (Corinne Balayé ed. 2000, 71).
[186] In Burke's treatise of The Sublime and the Beautiful.

Gloom and Mountain Glory, Marjorie Hope Nicolson lays out this discourse by explaining how there was a tendency in nineteenth century poets not only to take an enthusiastic interest in mountains but also to associate mountains with the aesthetics of the sublime. This, however, she says was a phenomenon that was new and particular to the nineteenth century because earlier centuries had either depicted mountains unfavorably or had taken only a minimal interest or had not given any attention to mountains (Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory 2). She traces how John Ruskin in Modern Painters had already observed that artists had shown very little attention to mountains and ruins during the classical, medieval, and Renaissance period (Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory 4-5). However, Ruskin had also noticed how overwhelmingly in the nineteenth century the painting of landscape had replaced portrait painting (Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory 5). Nicolson writes how Ruskin thought that "Human interest had all but disappeared from the pictures he saw on the walls of the gallery. Landscape had become engrossing to painters, and mountains, ravines, forests, and ruins the 'exclusive subjects of reverent contemplation' (Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory 5). Nicolson argues that the recurrent representation of mountains in the early nineteenth century was verging on a "contemporary obsession of artists with mountains and ruins" (Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory 5). Thus, she suggests that the "imagination" of these writers and painters was awakened by the "irregularity" and "asymmetry" of mountains that aesthetically defied neoclassical standards of "regularity, symmetry, proportion" (Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory 15).[187] Nicolson emphasizes how the "discovery" of the sublime as a new

[187] Referring to Arthur O. Lovejoy's "The Gothic Revival and the Return to Nature" and "The Chinese Origin of a Romanticism", Nicolson also writes that throughout the eighteenth century, there was the novel idea "of Nature as aesthetic norm, when men revolting against the long 'classical' emphasis upon regularity, proportion and restraint as criteria, began to justify irregularity over symmetry as an aesthetic principle. Interest in asymmetry, Professor Lovejoy believed, began with landscape gardening, when the 'natural' garden began to triumph over

aesthetic category was a turning point with artists who became fascinated with mountains (Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory 27). She explains "aesthetic emotions, long felt but never clearly defined, were struggling for utterance" among intellectuals who "sought a vocabulary" to convey their newfound awareness of the sublime in the mountains (Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory 271). Thus, this attempt to express feelings of the sublime is manifested in PBS when in his letter he writes the phrase "To exhaust the epithets", as quoted in the above passage, which is also a sign of how difficult it is to convey in language the sublime (The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley 220). Even though by this time PBS would already have been familiar with expressions about the sublime through Kant and Burke,[188] yet there is this experience of the inadequacy of words to express the sublime. Nicolson explains that John Dennis, who visited the Alps in the late seventeenth century, was one of the first English literary critics to "develop an aesthetic" of the sublime and to differentiate it from the Beautiful (Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory 279). She maintains that Dennis upon visiting the Alps, felt, in his words, "delightful horror" and "terrible joy"; it was "an experience for which nothing in his training had prepared him" (Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory 279). In other words, unlike other writers who were already familiar through the accounts of other thinkers of the expected emotions that are linked with the sublime, Dennis was unprepared to express his amazement at the new scenery that evoked the sublime.[189] In my discussion of the sublime, Dennis is important because he makes an especial

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the 'artificial'. It was later extended to literature." (Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory 23). Drawing from Nicolson explanations, interest in asymmetry has thus its origin both in Gothic architecture and Chinese gardens.

[188] According to the Shelleys' reading list given at the end of the Journals, he has read both authors.

[189] John Dennis writes in a letter dated from Oct.25 1688:

> We entered the Savoy in the Morning, and past over Mount Aiguebellette. The ascent was the more easie, because it wound about the Mountain. But as soon as we had conquer'd one half of it, the unusual height in which we found our selves, the impeding Rock that hung over us, the

connection between the sublime and enthusiasm. As Nicolson points out, Dennis identifies the "Enthusiastic Passions" as being "Admiration, Terror, Horror, Joy, Sadness, Desire" ("The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry" 333; Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory 282). He experiences these "Enthusiastic Passions" upon encountering the Alps. Dennis writes, "In the mean time we walk'd upon the very brink, in a litteral sense, of Destruction; one Stumble, and both Life and Carcass had been at once destroy'd. The sense of all this produc'd different motions in me, viz. a delightful Horrour, a terrible Joy, and at the same time, that I was definitely pleas'd, I trembled" ("Letter describing his crossing of the Alps" 380). The "delightful Horrour" and the "terrible Joy" are the "enthusiastic passions" that he feels, and the fact that he trembles suggests that his state of enthusiasm produces in him physical sensations.[190] Moreover, Dennis says:

> "I am delighted, 'tis true at the prospect of Hills and Valleys, of flowry Meads, and murmuring Streams, yet it is a delight that is consistent with Reason, a delight that creates or improves Meditation. But transporting Pleasures follow'd the sight of the Alpes, and what unusual transports think you were those, that were mingled with horrours, and sometimes with despair?" ("Letter describing his crossing the Alps" 381).

> dreadful Depth of the Precipice, and the Torrent that roar'd at the bottom, gave us such a view as was altogether new and amazing. (380 Critical Works of John Dennis)

The adjectives that he uses to describe the danger associated with the landscape confirm Nicolson's argument that he struggled to find the right vocabulary to express his experience of the sublime.

[190] However, it is important to point out that this state of enthusiasm was often seen negatively during the Enlightenment period because the emphasis was on reason. Mee writes, "What these philosophical attacks on enthusiasm often had in common with the older religious discourse was the suspicion of the passions intruding themselves on to the purity of rational discourse. For the impulses that the enthusiast mistook for the voice of God were identified with the excitements of the body, especially given that classic enthusiastic behavior was identified with the shaking and quaking of religious sects" (12). In fact, Mee explains that Dennis's "reputation as a serious critic (was) destroyed and even now barely recovered" (55).

He emphasizes that what he is feeling is not in tune with "reason**",** and thus his "enthusiastic passions"[191] approach Plato's elucidation of the poet's inspiration.[192] Nature that evokes these "enthusiastick passions" in the mind of the viewer is linked with the sublime. Thus, there is significance in Adrian's enthusiastic response to the sublime in nature since it can be traced to Dennis's attempt to voice his enthusiasm in face of the sublime but also to the prevalent nineteenth century aesthetic discourse concerning the sublime and the Alps. Timothy Clark explains that, ultimately, this emphasis on enthusiasm would lead Dennis to "a view of poetic creativity as a carefully-regulated form of frenzy, analogous to the delirium of religious enthusiasm but capable of acceptable insight into the cosmic order—'poetic enthusiasm'" (The Theory of Inspiration 65). In her depiction of the Alps, Shelley draws from this tradition of 'poetic enthusiasm' of which PBS's "Mont Blanc" is a part. Thus, she too participates in shaping poetic theory together with the male Romantic poets.

Shelley links the enthusiasm that is caused by the sublime beauty in nature with healing action. In The Last Man, right after encountering the sublime in the Alps, the remaining group of humans hears Haydn's 'New Created World' being played. It is an oratorio that recounts the story of creation in Genesis. Writing to Leigh Hunt on December 11th 1823, Shelley says to him that she has become, "a convert to Haydn" and asks him "Do you know the piece, "A new healed world"—in his Creation; what a wonderful stream of sound it is" (LMWS Vol. I Bennett 408). The fact that Shelley refers to Haydn's Creation as "new healed world" and that, in The Last Man, she chooses to have the piece heard by the group of friends when they are near the Alps is related to their hope of finding healing in

[191] As mentioned earlier and as Nicolson points out on p. 282 in Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory, Dennis discusses the "enthusiastic passions" in "The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry" p. 333;
[192] Nicolson maintains that Dennis may be better understood if read in relation to the "background of Cambridge Platonism" (note 15, 282).

Switzerland. Despite the devastation that the plague has also caused in Switzerland, Lionel says, "Yet we were not quite wrong in seeking a scene like this, whereon to close the drama. Nature true to the last, consoled us in the very heart of misery. Sublime grandeur of outward objects soothed our hapless hearts, and were in harmony with our desolation" (The Last Man 331). The "sublime grandeur" of the Alps brings about comfort to their wearied spirits. Similarly, Frankenstein is able to find some solace within his tormented mind during his trip to the Alps. He says, "These sublime and magnificent scenes afforded me the greatest consolation that I was capable of receiving. They elevated me from all littleness of feeling; and although they did not remove my grief, they subdued and tranquilized it" (Frankenstein Rieger ed. 91). Likewise, Adrian would also exclaim, "'Why,' cried he, at last, 'Why oh heart, whisperest thou of grief to me? Drink in the beauty of that scene, and possess delight beyond what a fabled paradise could afford'" (The Last Man 327). Both Frankenstein and Adrian seem to find strength and courage from the sublime beauty of the scenery. Thus, Shelley shows how enthusiastic feelings aroused by the sublime encountered in the scenery of the Alps have a soothing effect upon pain.[193] & [194] This is emphasized to a greater extent in the 1831

[193] This idea that the mountains can bring healing is also present in Rousseau's La Nouvelle Héloise, Saint-Preux says :

> Ce fut là que je démêlai sensiblement dans la pureté de l'air où je me trouvais, la véritable cause du changement de mon humeur, et du retour de cette paix intérieure que j'avais perdue depuis longtemps. En effet, c'est une impression générale qu'éprouvent tous les hommes, quoiqu'ils ne l'observent pas tous, que sur les hautes montagnes où l'air est pur est subtil, on se sent plus de facilité dans la respiration, plus de légèreté dans le corps, plus de sérénité dans l'esprit, les plaisirs sont moins ardents, les passions plus modérées. Les méditations y prennent je ne sais quel caractère grand et sublime, proportionné aux objets qui nous frappent, je ne sais quelle volupté tranquille qui n'a rien d'âcre et de sensuel. Il semble qu'en s'élevant au-dessus du séjour des hommes on y laisse tous les sentiments bas et terrestres, et qu'à mesure qu'on approche des régions éthérées l'âme contracte quelque chose de leur inaltérable pureté…Je doute qu'aucune agitation violente, aucune maladie de vapeurs pût tenir contre un pareil séjour prolongé, et je suis surpris que des bains de l'air salutaire et bienfaisant des montagnes ne soient pas un des grands remèdes de la médecine et de la morale…enfin le spectacle a je ne sais quoi de magique, de surnaturel qui ravit l'esprit et les sens ; on oublie tout, on s'oublie soi-même, on ne sait plus où l'on est. (124-125 Vol. I)

edition of Frankenstein.[195] While observing Mont Blanc and "listening to the rushing of the Arve" from his window, Frankenstein says,, "The same lulling sounds acted as a lullaby to my too keen sensations; when I placed my head upon my pillow, sleep crept over me; I felt it as it came, and blest the giver of oblivion" (Frankenstein1831 ed. Butler ed. note 74, 221). Thus, in the 1831 edition, Shelley emphasizes even further the healing impact of the natural scenery of the Alps.

Shelley associates the Alps with healing because they were considered to be the site where the origins of the world began. In his poem "Mont Blanc", PBS designates the Alps as "these primaeval mountains", which refers to the primeval forces of creation (line 99). Duncan

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Under the influence of the nature of the mountains, humans become more serene, and their souls, like the mountains, become more pure. The mountains are depicted as having a regenerative effect on humans and as capable of healing both their spirits and bodies. The fact that the souls of humans become more pure under the influence of mountains draws attention that they are no longer influenced by society's corruption. The mountains have the capacity to make one forget one's cares. Thus, it is here that the remaining characters in The Last Man feel soothed and where the plague comes to an end.

[194] In a similar manner Kant would argue that the sublime can be empowering to the spirit of man by allowing him to find inner strength. Kant writes, "And we like to call these objects sublime because they raise the soul's fortitude above its usual middle range and allow us to discover in ourselves an ability to resist which is of a quite different kind, and which gives us the courage [to believe] that we could be a match for nature's seeming omnipotence" (120). Adrian, Lionel and the remaining groups of humans respond to a sublimity that is linked to great beauty and that has a healing power upon them.

[195] Still, in the 1831 edition, Frankenstein says, "The immense mountains and precipices that overhung me on every side—the sound of the river raging among the rocks, and the dashing of the waterfalls around, spoke of a power mighty as Omnipotence" (220). This link between the Alps and the Omnipotent is an element that was less prevalent in the 1818 edition. Françoise Dufour explains « Même si Dieu n'est pas expressément mentionné, le Mont Blanc inspire un sentiment proche du sacré : il devient un symbole d'éternité, une sorte de substitut du divin. » (60). As it is apparent in her 1831 edition of Frankenstein, it seems that the loss of her husband stirs to a greater extent sentiments of the divine in connection with the Alps . Similarly, in Shelley's Perkin Warbeck, mountains are further associated with the Divine in King James's speech:

> I love the mist and snow, the tameless winds and howling torrent, the bleak unadorned precipice, the giant pines where the North makes music. The grassy upland and the cornfield, these belong to man, and to her they call Nature, the fair, gaudy dame; but God takes to himself, and lives among, these sublime rocks, / where power, majesty and eternity are shaped forth, and the grandeur of heaven-piercing cliffs allies us to a simple but elevating image of the Creator. (230)

Thus, the link between the sublimity of mountains and the Creator is even more pronounced in her later edition of Frankenstein and in her novel Perkin Warbeck.

Wu argues that "Mont Blanc may be Shelley's masterpiece. It is an attempt to explain the function of poetry, where it comes from, and how it relates to the cosmos…Its argument is that the poet is inspired by the same forces that produced the precipitous, violent landscape before him" (1046). In other words, the forces that created Mont Blanc also create poetry. Similarly, Leighton writes, "In 'Mont Blanc' his quest to find the Power which impels all things with relentless and indifferent strength is also a quest for the original Power of his own writing." (62). As Leighton suggests, this search for the Power is the desire to find the sources of the creative process. Because the Alps have been closely associated with the origins of the world, the creative process is linked with cosmology. Sarah Powrie writes, "Cosmology and poetry share a long history of mutual association. Each celebrates the mystery of the creative process, whether this be natural generation or artistic creation" (212). Thus, the creative process is to be considered as originating in the original source that brought forth the creation of the world. The Alps were associated with the primordial forces of creation, and, as explained by Wu, PBS links these creative energies to poetry. Thus, it is this creative force that links this site to a certain cosmology. By encountering the sublime in Mont Blanc, PBS went to the sources of that force that created both nature and poetry. That source has potentially a healing power because it is there at the "primordial forces of nature"[196] that the plague finally stops in

[196] Nicolson argues that there was a theological controversy that existed throughout the centuries about whether the mountains emerged at the time of creation as recounted in Genesis or whether they emerged at the time of Noah's Flood because of humanity's sins ("Literary Attitudes toward Mountains" 253-260). In the second scenario, it was believed that the original beauty of the earth was defiled by their appearance. Nicolson explains that Thomas Burnet's Sacred Theory of the Earth is considered as an influential work because he "made England "mountain conscious" to an extent not hitherto known" ("Literary Attitudes Toward Mountains" 258). Burnet adopted the view that the mountains were created as a result of man's trespasses, but because he also expressed such feelings of awe and wonder at them, his text was groundbreaking because no other writer had perceived them from a sublime perspective ("Literary Attitudes toward Mountains" 253-260). Also, Wordsworth in The Thirteen-Book Prelude, while recounting his crossing of the Alps, he describes them "Characters of the great Apocalypse" (line 570). In an explicatory note, Wu writes, "Contemporary geological theory held that all but the highest Alpine peaks were created by the retreating waters of the Flood. Thus the features of the landscape would indeed have been engraved ('charactered') by the first apocalyptic event in the history of mankind. They also

Shelley's The Last Man: "Her barbarous tyranny came to its close here in the rocky vale of Chamounix" (332 The Last Man)[197]. This is consistent with other writers of the Romantic period who associated the Alps with the origins of creation. In order to demonstrate this fact, it is worthy to quote at length the narrator of the documentary Turner in Switzerland who presents the following quote from "On Granite" of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe:

> Every journey into uncharted mountains reaffirmed the long-standing observation that granite is the loftiest and deepest-lying substance, that this

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function as a reminder of the apocalypse to come" (note 16, 555). By choosing the Alpine scenery to end the plague, Shelley is in agreement with this idea that the Alps have an apocalyptic aura, and this is demonstrated by the opening of the narrative where the sibylline leaves have also an apocalyptic quality (I am drawing from Ernest Tuveson who argues that the Sibyl's books are apocalyptic (Dictionary of the History of Ideas 224). There are also other instances where the allusion to Noah's Flood signals the apocalyptic tendency of the novel. One of these instances is when the surviving humans make a "catalogue" of "dear friends", meaning several favorite animals, to bring with them when they leave England (The Last Man 258). Another allusion is when, at the end of the narrative, Lionel hopes to find "a saved pair of lovers" whose "children" will re-fill the earth (The Last Man 364).

[197] There is another reason that motivates Shelley to end the plague at the Vale of Chamounix. She associates the Alps with Percy's aesthetics, and she thus makes another tribute to the memory of her husband by ending the plague at a setting that was very meaningful to him for its beauty and sublimity. In a letter to Leigh Hunt dated August 3 1823, Mary Shelley writes:

> From the quai that overlooks the Rhone, we see Mont Blanc—This mountain is associated to me with many delightful hours—We lived under its eye in Geneva—and when at Lyons we looked with joy at its sublime *Dome*. It is in itself so magnificent—the utmost heights of Cenis and the Mungone were only flecked with snow—Mont Blanc has still on its huge mantle, and its aiguilles purer than the whitest marble, pierce the heaven around it—the sight of this might have given Michael Angelo a still finer idea of a 'dome in the air' than the Pantheon itself. I wonder, my best friend, if in other planets and systems there are other sublimer objects and more lovely scenes to entrance Shelley with still greater delight than he felt at seeing these wondrous piles of earth's primaeval matter—or does he only feel and see the beauties we contemplate with greater intensity—I fear if he c[oul]d send us any of his Poetry from where he now is, the world w[oul]d find it more unintelligible and elementary than that which we have. He loved nature, so enthusiastically that one is irrisistibly led to imagine his painless spirit among its divinest combinations—in society even of those he loved, I do not feel his presence so vividly as I do when I hear the wind among the trees;—when I see the shadows on the mountains—the sunshine in the ravines, or behold heaven and earth meet, when she arises towards it or the clouds descend to her. During the winter how horrible was the sound and look of the sea, but I began to love it and fancy him near it when it sparkled beneath the sun; yet after all, dear Hunt, I was surprised to find that I felt his presence more vividly during my journey through the ravines of the Alps, near the roar of the waterfalls and the 'inland murmur' of the precipitous rivers. How I should delight to make a tour with you among these scenes—feeling him and all about him as you do—still you w[oul]d know him better, if you visited these spots which he loved better than any others in the world" (Jones The Letters of Mary W. Shelley Vol. I 242)

As she explains to Hunt, The Alps represent for her the intellectual beauty of Percy's mind.

> mineral, which modern research has made easier to identify, forms the fundament of our earth, a fundament upon which all other mountains rest. It lies unshakably in the deepest bowels of the earth…Filled with these thoughts I approach you, the most ancient and worthiest monuments of time. As I stand high atop a barren peak and survey the wide expanse below, I can say to myself: 'Here you stand upon ground which reaches right down into the deepest recesses of the Earth; no younger strata, no pile of alluvial debris comes between you and the firm foundation of the primal world. What you tread here is not the perpetual grave of those beautiful, fruitful valleys; these peaks have never given birth to a living being and have never devoured a living being, for they are before all life and above all life…Here, on this primal and everlasting altar raised directly on the ground of creation, I bring the being of all beings a sacrifice. I feel the first and most abiding origin of our existence; I survey the world with its undulating valleys and its distant fruitful meadows, my soul is exalted beyond itself and above all the world and it yearns for the heavens which are so near"[198]&[199] (131 & 132).

The relevance of this passage to my chapter is that Goethe connects the mountains formed of granite[200] with the origins of creation, but also the reverential tone of the speaker shows the

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[198] I first encountered this quote in the documentary film Turner in Switzerland.

[199] Although in this essay, Goethe does not specifically mention Mont Blanc or the Alps, it is probably safe to infer that this essay is based on his travels to Mont Blanc as his Letters from Switzerland seem to suggest.

[200] It is important to mention that the interest that these intellectuals demonstrated in Mont Blanc coincides with the rising interest in geology. For instance, in a letter from Switzerland, Goethe writes, "Nous nous mîmes en route pour le Gothard…Nous atteignîmes une première cascade, puis une seconde, plus belle. Pierre verdoyante riche de mica, du granit. Encore une belle cascade, quelque arbres desséchés. Vue grandiose sur la Reuss, au passage d'un vieux sapin et d'un grand rocher. Toujours du granit, de la pierre de quartz mélangée à du talc" (175). It is evident in his letters from Switzerland that Goethe was attentive to the geology of the mountains as much as he admired the landscape. The fascination that the Romantics had with the glaciers has its roots in

importance of the Alps as being a site of quintessential sublimity for the Romantics. Furthermore, it is there where the elemental forces of nature have been thought to recur that the creature in Frankenstein also finds refuge[201] in the glaciers of Mont Blanc. It is while gazing with wonder at Mont Blanc that Frankenstein perceives the creature. In other words, it is in these scenes of primordial forces that he encounters his creation and where the creature confronts him and asks him: "How dare you sport with life?" (94). He comes face to face with his creation at the site where it was believed that the source of all creation begins. Moreover, Frankenstein says that it was in a "fit of enthusiastic madness that he created a rational creature" (214). He creates the creature when possessed by an enthusiasm that is akin to Plato's notion, in Phaedrus, of the madness that inhabits the poet when in a fit of inspiration. Whereas ordinary human beings are unfit to inhabit the Alps, the creature is able to survive in the harsh environment of the glaciers because in arousing terror he is associated with the

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studies of such naturalists as Horace Bénédict de Saussure and Georges Louis Leclerc Buffon, to whom Percy refers in his "Letters from Geneva" (The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley 225 & 226). This appeal to the geological and flora constitution of the Alps is present in one of Percy's letters where he says, "We have bought some minerals and plants, and two or three crystal seals, at Mont Blanc, to preserve the remembrance of having approached it…The most interesting of my purchases is a large collection of all the seeds of rare alpine plants, with their name written upon the outside of the papers that contain them" (The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley 228). His interest in rare plants and minerals that compose the natural scenery of the Alps shows how the poetry and writings about the Alpine mountains, notably Percy's "Mont Blanc", arose about from an interest in geology and naturalistic studies. Similarly, Françoise Dufour explains that in the eighteenth century the natural landscape and the aesthetic of the sublime attracted many naturalists and artists. Dufour writes :

> Dans la seconde moitié du dix-huitième siècle, pas une année ne se passe sans qu'un voyageur ne laisse des traces écrites de ses expéditions. Cette passion pour la haute montagne est due à l'émergence d'une sensibilité préromantique qui tend à idéaliser une nature encore vierge, mais aussi à l'intérêt que le siècle des Lumières porte à la science et à la découverte du monde. Les Alpes sont à la fois un nouvel Éden et un jardin de la connaissance où botanistes, cartographes, géologues et glaciologues vont herboriser et effectuer des relevés. C'est au dix-huitième siècle que curiosité scientifique, goût du risque et apparition d'une esthétique nouvelle modifient le regard que l'homme porte sur la montagne : ce qui était autrefois considéré comme un mauvais pays par les paysans et les voyageurs devient un paysage grâce aux artistes. (55)

[201] The creature says, "The desert mountains and dreary glaciers are my refuge. I have wandered here many days; the caves of ice, which I only do not fear, are a dwelling to me, and the only one which man does not grudge" (Frankenstein 95). According to the documentary Turner in Switzerland, in the nineteenth century the Alps were a lot more inaccessible because they were less means of transportation for visiting them. Thus, in Frankenstein, although the glaciers inspired terror for humans, the creature was more fit to survive and to inhabit the scenery because of his constitution.

sublime itself. In order to illustrate how the Alps were associated not only with the primordial forces of nature but also with horror, it is useful to quote a passage from William Beattie's Switzerland Illustrated presented by the narrator in the film documentary Turner in Switzerland:

> Among the numerous scenes presented to us in the sublime solitudes of the Alps, or which the strength of imagination had invested with peculiar horror, that of the Via Mala stands forth in fearful preeminence. It seems, indeed, the vestibule of desolation, conducting us to the very jaws of horror, and plunging us into the seeming precincts of a nether world…The interval between the bridges is the point where the distinctive features of this defile are more especially concentrated, and where the Demon Gorge manifests his presence by the display of every attribute that can surprise, startle, or appal, the spectator. The yawning avenue through which we slowly advance seems as if torn asunder in some awful convulsion, when the earth, tortured by internal fires, and gasping in agony, subsided at last from the struggle, but left in her scars and chasms the fearful evidence of primordial contest. (91-92) [202]

The view of the terror that nature can inspire is evidence to the author of this passage that the Alps, or more precisely the Via Mala, are associated with the elemental forces of creation.[203] It

[202] I first encountered this quotation in the film documentary Turner in Switzerland. I owe a great deal of my inspiration to this film.

[203] Similarly, Rousseau also suggests suggest that there is something primeval in the scenery of the Alps. In Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloise, « Nous y parvînmes après une heure de marche par des sentiers tortueux et frais, qui, montant insensiblement entre les arbres et les rochers, n'avaient rien de plus incommode que la longueur du chemin…Ce lieu solitaire formait un réduit sauvage et désert ; mais plein de ces sortes de beautés qui ne plaisent qu'aux âmes sensibles et paraissent horrible aux autres. Un torrent formé par la fonte des neiges roulait à vingt pas de nous une eau bourbeuse, et charriait avec bruit du limon, du sable et des pierres. Derrière nous une chaîne de roches inaccessible séparait l'esplanade où nous étions de cette partie des alpes qu'on nomme les glacières, parce que d'énormes sommets de glaces qui s'accroissent incessamment les couvrent depuis le commencement

is therefore no coincidence that Mary Shelley sets Frankenstein's coming into contact with his creature in the Alps. By associating Mont Blanc with the primordial forces of nature, both Mary and Percy Shelley are participating, together with other intellectuals such as Goethe, Rousseau, and Beattie, in the aesthetic discourse of the Alps as being primeval and sublime.

Shelley's treatment of the sublime in The Last Man and in Frankenstein is connected to the travel writing that she and her husband participated in. In relation to the Shelleys' History of Six Weeks' Tour, Jeanne Moskal writes:

> Their itinerary included tourist sites associated with Jean-Jacques Rousseau as well as Mont Blanc, recently measured as the highest mountain in Europe. Mont Blanc was lionized by aestheticians, tourists, and writers as a site of sublimity, an aesthetic term defined by Edmund Burke for natural sites that enraptured its viewers while exciting awed ideas of pain and danger. (The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley 243)

As Moskal points out, Mont Blanc was viewed as representing the epitome of sublimity.[204] When Frankenstein, his father, Elizabeth, and Ernest make an excursion to the valley of

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du monde » (139). The inaccessibility of the glaciers as well as the association of the mountains with the beginnings of the world are themes that are also present in Rousseau.

[204] Although in my reading of Shelley there is no strong link between the Vesuvius and the sublime, the Vesuvius was, together with the Alps, a great touristic attraction in the early nineteenth century that was associated with the sublime in both Madame de Staël and PBS. For instance, Madame de Staël would relate how man is impotent in face of the mightiness of the Vesuvius: "la nature n'est plus dans ces lieux en relation avec l'homme. Il ne peut plus s'en croire dominateur ; elle échappe à son tyran par la mort" (Corinne Balayé ed. 2000, 320). Just as Shelley conveys how enthusiastic emotions for the sublime are manifested in bodily sensations, Madame de Staël links the sublimity of Vesuvius with enthusiasm that is sensed in the body:

> Oswald et Corinne arrivèrent à Naples pendant que l'éruption du Vésuve durait encore. Ce n'était de jour qu'une fumée noire qui pouvait se confondre avec les nuages ; mais le soir, en s'avançant sur le balcon de leur demeure, ils éprouvèrent une émotion tout à fait inattendue…Ce phénomène du Vésuve cause un véritable battement du cœur…nous sentons que les plus grands mystères de ce monde ne consistent pas tous dans l'homme, et qu'une force indépendante de lui le menace ou le protège, selon des lois qu'il ne peut pénétrer. (Balayé ed. 2000, 282)

Chamounix upon mules, the path they undertake resonates a lot with the journey that the Shelleys undertake in A History of Six Weeks' Tour, which points out how travel literature is intertwined with fictional writing within Shelley's novels. The narrator of the documentary Turner in Switzerland explains that "Switzerland had been a popular tourist destination of the time" (n. pag.). Poets and painters such as Wordsworth and Turner, being attracted by the sublime view of the Alps, had visited Switzerland. Moreover, the speaker in Turner in Switzerland claims that Rousseau's novel was crucial in "showing its importance as a traveler's bible or as teaching the traveler how to respond to the scenery of the Alps" with the appropriate feelings of awe and ecstasy (n. pag.).[205] In "Les Alpes Vues par Mary Shelley et les Peintres de son Temps", Françoise Dufour also writes, "La Nouvelle Héloise publiée en 1761 contribue à populariser les paysages du Valais et les bords du Lac Léman" (55). Thus, the Shelleys' depiction of Mont Blanc is a result of travel literature.[206] In fact, PBS has

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The unexpected emotion that both Oswald and Corinne feel when witnessing the Vesuvius can be compared to the "enthusiastic passions" that Dennis discusses. Moreover, in her Carnet de Voyage, Madame de Staël writes, "Terreur qu'elle inspire à l'homme, terreur douce ensuite, quand cette merveille peut se contempler sans danger" (Corinne, quoted by Balayé note 1 ; Balayé ed. 2000, 281). The subdued terror that Madame de Staël contemplates can be compared to Kant's consideration of the sublime in Critique of Judgment:

> On the other hand, consider bold, overhanging and, as it were, threatening rocks, thunderclouds piling up in the sky and moving about accompanied by lightning and thunderclaps, volcanoes with all their destructive power, hurricanes with all the devastation they leave behind, the boundless ocean heaved up, the high waterfall of a mighty river, and so on. Compared to the might of any of these, our ability to resist becomes an insignificant trifle. Yet the sight of them becomes all the more attractive the more fearful it is, provided we are in a safe place. (120)

Similarly, Madame de Staël calls attention to the way that the terror aroused by the sublime is attractive when there is no immediate danger to our being—that is, if we observe the sublime object from a distance that ensures our safety. Moreover, PBS would also link, following his travels to the Alps, Vesuvius with the sublime. In a letter to Thomas Love Peacock dated December [17 or 18] of 1818, PBS writes, "Vesuvius is, after the glaciers the most impressive expression of the energies of nature I ever saw. It has not the immeasurable greatness the overpowering magnificence, nor above all the radiant beauty of the glaciers, but it has all their character of tremendous & irresistible strength (Jones 62). The phrase the "energies of nature" brings to mind the primordial forces of nature that PBS and other intellectuals of the Romantic era associated with the glaciers. In fact in this letter, PBS uses a lot of the phrases that recall the descriptions that previous critics associated with the terror of the Alps such as: "most horrible chaos", "ghastly chasms", and "terrible confusion" (Jones 62-63).

[205] According to the documentary Turner in Switzerland, Rousseau also uses the word "ecstacy" and "rapture" to describe the effect that the Lake of Geneva has on his character in the novel.

[206] In Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory, Nicolson quotes Christopher Hussey who argues that "the awakening of England to an appreciation of landscape was a direct result of the Grand Tour fashionable with the

Rousseau's The Nouvelle Heloise with him during his travels in the Alps, as it is revealed from his letters from Geneva where he makes numerous references to Rousseau's La Nouvelle Héloise[207]. (The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley 215). Thus, Shelley by having Lionel and Adrian journey to this favorite travel destination also participates in the intellectual interest that the Alps represented

Despite the magnificence and healing action of the Alps, the sublime is also associated with man's vulnerability in face of nature's omnipotence. For instance, the plague is a manifestation of the sublime especially in connection to the sublimity of Mother Nature and of God. Nicolson argues that for Dennis manifestations such as famine and the plague represent the sublime because they leave the viewer in awe over God's power. Nicolson writes:

> In another passage, Dennis was still more specific in listing the 'hints' of 'Enthusiastic Terrour,' which 'expressed in Poetry make that Spirit, that Passion, and that Fire, which so wonderfully please.' These sources are: 'Gods, Daemons, Hell, Spirits and Souls of Men, Miracles,…Thunders, Tempests, raging seas, Inundations, Torrents, Earthquakes, Volcanoes, Monsters, Serpents, Lions, Tygers, Fire, War, Pestilence, Famine.' Such ideas, he said, 'will be found to be the more terrible, as they have more religion in them.' Meditating upon such 'Wonders of the Universe' as exhibit the attributes of the Creator in varying degrees, the soul experiences expansion in some degree as

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aristocracy after the isolation of the country from the rest of Europe, during the greater part of the seventeenth century" (25).

[207] In one of these references, PBS writes, "I read Julie all day; an overflowing, as it now seems, surrounded by the scenes which it has so wonderfully peopled, of sublimest genius, and more than human sensibility. Meillerie, the Castle of Chillon, Clarens, the mountains of La Valais and Savoy, present themselves to the imagination as monuments of things that were once familiar, and of beings that were once dear to it (The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley 217). The fact that Percy reads Rousseau during his travels in Switzerland and that the novel accompanies him during his travels to the Alps shows to what extent he was influenced by Rousseau's descriptions of the Alps.

> when it mediates upon God Himself. (Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory 283)

As Nicolson points out, "pestilence" had already been identified by Dennis as being part of the sublime; therefore, the destruction that the plague causes displays both God's and nature's mightiness. Andreas Friesenhagen writes when no "rational explanation" could be given for awesome and terrible events in the natural world, they were interpreted as a manifestation of divine power" (26-27). The characters certainly wonder how it is that God remains indifferent to their pain: "Our name was written 'a little lower than the angels', and, behold, we were no better than ephemera" (The Last Man 311). Lionel's words show incomprehensibility towards the plans of a sublime God. Dufour writes, "Même si le cadre grandiose des Alpes apparaît comme un substitut métaphorique du divin, Dieu se dérobe ou reste indifférent" (62). This bewilderment is also present in Beatrice who curses at a deity that invents evil (Valperga 364). Similarly, Corinne would say "Sublime créateur de cette belle nature, protège-nous" (Corinne Balayé ed.2000, 339). During her second improvisation, Corinne also links God with the sublime and reflects on how nature is unaffected by man's suffering. Likewise, Lionel ponders on how man is impotent over nature's powerfulness:

> Nature, our mother, and our friend, had turned on us a brow of menace. She shewed us plainly though she permitted us to assign her laws and subdue her apparent powers, yet if she put forth but a finger, we must quake. She could take our globe, fringed with mountains, girded by the atmosphere, containing the condition of our well being, and all that man's mind could invent or his force achieve; she could take the ball in her hand, and cast into space, where

> life would be drunk up, and man and all his efforts annihilated. (The Last Man 183)

The sublimity of Mother Nature is that she has power to which man is helpless. Furthermore, Lionel asks a series of questions that resemble the questions that Corinne poses during her second improvisation—these questions imply doubt: "Did God create man, merely in the end to become dead earth in the midst of healthful vegetating nature? Was he of no more account to his Maker, than a field of corn blighted in the ear? Were our proud dreams thus to fade?" (The Last Man 311). Lionel's thoughts on Mother Nature's mightiness resemble Corinne's statements during her second improvisation, asking if earth has no pity for her children (Corinne, Balayé ed. 2000, 337). In The Last Man, Shelley imagines a world where man is not the center of the universe since earth survives man and will continue to live without him indifferent to his absence. The idea that nature will outlast man contributes to a sense of helplessness occasioned by the fact that man has no control over his destiny. Kari E. Lokke argues, "In its refusal to place humanity at the center of the universe, its questioning of our privileged position in relation to nature, then, The Last Man constitutes a profound and prophetic challenge to Western humanism" ("The Last Man" 116). Indeed, there is a sense of reversal of the traditional order of the universe. Dufour writes, "l'homme face à l'indifférence ou même à l'hostilité de la nature est renvoyé à sa condition d'homme déchu, puni par Dieu pour avoir péché" (60-61). Even if the landscape is restorative to the mind and bodies of the characters, there is the sense that, ultimately, the original transgression of man dooms them to an everlasting condemnation that leads them to their extinction. Lionel's grief is probably related to the fact that Shelley had lost her three children and her husband had recently died. Her sense of loss is reflected in Lionel's meditation on the incomprehensibility of death.

In the second part of my chapter, I will discuss the significance of music, especially Joseph Haydn's Creation, in relation to Shelley's notions of universal harmony and inspiration. Haydn's Oratorio has to do with the creation of the world, and this subject was considered sublime. Friesenhagen explains that inspiring sentiments of great astonishment, the creation of the world stood for the "paradigm of the sublime" (26-27). Given the discourses that associated the Alps with the primordial forces of creation, my argument is that, in The Last Man, the Alps being the epitome of sublime grandeur are paralleled to the sources of creation, and this is evident because Shelley chooses to play Haydn's Creation at this site. By choosing to play Haydn's Creation at the landscape of the Alps, Shelley contrasts a world of Eden where the Fall of Man is of minor significance with a narrative where humanity's hope for redemption is shattered. In Judeo-Christian belief, creation is closely linked to the original sin, which led to the Fall of man. However, Friesenhagen explains that, in contrast to the book of Genesis and Milton's Paradise Lost, the subject of the Fall of Man is not of principal significance in Haydn's Creation (26-27). Swieten, the writer of the lyrics of Haydn's Oratorio, aimed at safeguarding his version of the Creation from an emphasis on the Fall (Friesenhagen 26-27). Through a sublime representation of humanity, Swieten offers a utopian view of creation (Friesenhagen 26-27). Thus, Shelley, by having Haydn's Creation being played at the foot of the Alps, juxtaposes a dystopian world at battle with a utopian narrative. Both the journey to the Alps and the music being played reflect Adrian's, Lionel's, and humanity's quest for a harmonious communion with the creator and the universe. Through the music, the beauty of the landscape and the fact that the plague ceases at the vale of Chamounix, their longing is satisfied, even if only momentarily. Jean de Palacio argues that

after bidding farewell to music at the beginning of volume three, the rediscovery of music in far away land coincides with:

> l'annonce de la guérison du monde infesté…Les rescapés, encore sous le coup de leur émerveillement au spectacle de la nature,—'the divine magnificence of this terrestrial exhibition' —, qui, succédant à l'insalubrité et à la contagion, semble, dans sa pureté, fraîchement issue des mains du créateur, entendent monter d'une église rurale de Suisse les accents d'un orgue. La musique oubliée fait ainsi sa réapparition, jetant comme un lien occulte entre l'orgue de Westminster et l'orgue de Ferney, la cité ravagée et la nature qui est promesse de régénération, ou plutôt déjà l'accomplissement de cette promesse. C'est alors que se clôt le cycle. Verney et ses compagnons entendent à nouveau la musique en reprenant conscience de la beauté de la création à la faveur du décor grandiose des montagnes alpines...Dans un décor encore proche, pour ainsi dire, du chaos originel, la musique nous fait assister à la renaissance du monde. (Mary Shelley dans son œuvre : Contribution aux études Shelleyennes 332-334)

It is through the harmony of music in a landscape that is associated with the elemental forces of creation that such regeneration can occur that can heal the world from the plague.

In her letter to Leigh Hunt dated on December 11th 1823, Shelley writes how she fell in love with Haydn's Creation, and, immediately after, she mentions how it reminds her of the line "untwisting all the chains of the hidden soul of harmony" in Milton's "l'Allegro" (LMWS Bennett Vol. I, 408-409). Several critics have discussed the connection between Shelley's

reference to Haydn's Creation in The Last Man in relation to this letter to Hunt;[208] however, less attention has been given to the fact that she closely links in her mind Haydn's Creation with the line about "harmony" that she quotes from Milton's "l'Allegro". My argument is that she quotes this line from Milton because the word "harmony" alludes to Pythagoras notion of the "harmony of the spheres". James Haar writes, "Pythagoras is said to have taught that the universe is put together by means of harmonic laws and so produces, through the motion of the seven planets, rhythm and melody" (39). According to the theory of the planet of the spheres, the music that the planets make is indistinct to the human ear. Warren Chernaik explains, "The music of the spheres is a 'heavenly tune' that in its 'harmony' directs the measured 'motion' of the universe, but, according to convention, cannot be heard by ordinary mortals" (33). Similarly, Haar points out how human beings cannot perceive the sound of the Music of the Spheres: "Mortal beings, accustomed from birth to the sound of the cosmos, cannot ordinarily hear it; only in a vision, or after death, does its sublime harmony, of which terrestrial music is an imitation, reveal itself." (40). My assumption is, therefore, that Shelley quotes this particular line by Milton's "l'Allegro" because it expresses the longing of freeing the "hidden soul of harmony" in order that it would make the music of the spheres become audible.

The emotion that the remaining group of humans has upon overhearing Haydn's Creation being played at the foot of the Alps can be compared to the melancholic speaker of Milton's "Il Penseroso", the companion poem to "l'Allegro":[209]

> There let the pealing organ blow
>
> To the full-voiced choir below,

[208] See, for instance, Paley, Morrison, and De Palacio.
[209] In The Norton Anthology of English Literature Vol. I, the editors indicate that "*L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* are companion poems" (1443).

In service high and anthems clear,

As may sweetness, through mine ear,

Dissolve me into ecstasies,

And bring all heaven before mine eyes. (lines 161-166)

In The Last Man, the remaining group of friends experiences an inner and serene form of enthusiasm upon hearing the music when they arrive at the Alps. Thus, Shelley's quotation from l'Allegro, in her letter to Hunt, suggests that music allows for this transcendental experience, which is also present in Milton's "Il Penseroso, the companion poem to l'Allegro". Chernaik offers the following explanation, which can also be applied to what Lionel, Adrian, and their companions feel upon hearing music at the foot of the Alps. Chernaik writes, "Milton's recurrent theme is the transcendent, out-of-body experience, by which the listener is given momentary access to a realm beyond ordinary apprehensions, overheard music that can 'bring all heaven before mine eyes' ('Il Penseroso', 166)" (38). Thus, Shelley refers to "l'Allegro" in her letter to Hunt because there is an overlap between her view and Milton's view of this transcendental experience that music can create. Just as Milton's speaker longs to feel the kind of ecstasy that music can bring, the remaining humans on earth momentarily feel, in view of Lake Leman, an enthusiasm that is akin to the music that Milton's speaker says to "bring all heaven before mine eyes" ('Il Penseroso', 166).

In their travels in Italy, as I have argued in my previous chapter, Shelley and PBS were actively engaged in delineating the creative process by paying special notice to figures that represented an ideal state of inspiration. For instance, when in Rome, Mary Shelley writes, in a letter, how she and Percy saw the most beautiful statues; however, she gives more detailed

description of the statue of Apollo, which indicates her and her husband's interest in figures of inspiration:

> There is an Apollo—it is Shelley's favorite—in the museum of the Capitol he is standing leaning back with his feet crossed—one arm supports a lyre the other hand holds the instrument to play on it and his head is thrown back as he is in the act of being inspired and the expression of his countenance especially the lower part is more beautiful than you can immagine. (LMWS Volume I Bennett 88-89)

The Shelleys' admiration for the statue of Apollo is not only because he is depicted in a state of inspiration but also because he is closely associated with music, poetry, and prophecy, subjects which were dear to both writers. Their attention to figures represented in a state of inspiration is also evident in another letter, this time by PBS, to Thomas Love Peacock on 9th of November 1818, in which PBS praises Raphael's painting for capturing St. Cecilia's state of mystic ecstasy:

> We saw besides one picture of Raphael—St. Cecilia—this is another and a higher style. You forget that this is a picture as you look at it, and yet it is most unlike any of those things which we call reality. It is of the inspired and ideal kind, and seems to have been conceived & executed in a similar state of feeling to that which produced among the antients those perfect specimens of poetry and sculpture which are the baffling models of suc[c]eeding generations. There is an unity & perfection in it of an incommunicable kind. The central figure St. Caecilia seems rapt in such inspiration as produced her image in the painters mind, her deep dark eloquent eyes lifted up, her chestnut hair flung back from

> her forehead, one hand upon her bosom, her countenance as it were calmed by the depth of its passion & rapture, & penetrated throughout with the warm & radiant light of life. She is listening to the music of Heaven, & I imagine has just ceased to sing for the three figures that surround her evidently point by their attitudes towards [her], particularly St. John who with a tender yet impassioned gesture bends his countenance towards her languid with the depth of his emotion. At her feet lie instruments of music broken & unstrung. Of the colouring I do not speak, it eclipses nature, yet it has its truth and softness. (The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley Jones 51-52)

This shows the Shelleys' interest in inspiration. Just as in the reference to the statue of Apollo in Shelley's letter, there is no doubt that PBS is interested in Raphael's painting of "The Ecstasy of St. Cecilia" because it represents the perfect state of inspiration as described by Plato. At another level, there is also the traditional association of St. Cecilia with music and poetry, and this is an additional reason as to why PBS would be especially fascinated by Raphael's picture. Besides his inclination for poetry, PBS, like Shelley, had a strong interest in music. Indeed, Burton R. Pollin argues that numerous poems by Percy B. Shelley either directly refer to music or are written in such a manner as to call the attention of a musical composer (ii-iii). In fact, Pollin argues that many of PBS's poems have inspired hundreds of musical compositions in many languages (ii). Pollin further points out that PBS's correspondence of 1810-11 with Fergus Graham reveals that he wanted his poems to be adapted to music by this musician (iv-v). Given his interest in music, it is probable that an underlying reason for PBS's fascination with Raphael's St. Cecilia is that she is considered the

patron saint of music and poetry.[210] Thus, the Shelleys' captivation with the process of inspiration is revealed by their contemplation of works of art that capture subjects who are enraptured and are representative of music and poetry.

PBS's attention to St. Cecilia in Raphael's painting brings to mind another musical composition—Handel's "Ode for St. Cecilia's Day"[211], which addresses the music of the spheres. Barbara Witucky explains that Handel had been very popular in England both in Romantic and Victorian period (205-206). Although I have no evidence that Shelley was acquainted with Handel's "Ode for St. Cecilia's Day", I suspect that she must have been, for she makes several references to Handel in her letters. For instance, in 1823, she thrice[212] asks in her letters to Leigh Hunt for the title of one of Haydn's air that he loved. As testifies one of her letters to Leigh Hunt, she was also exposed to Handel's music by being in the company of the musician Vincent Novello (LMWS Bennett Vol. I, October 5 1823). In addition, she expresses her desire in a letter to John Howard Payne in 1825 to attend a concert at Drury Lane in which, as Bennett notes, music by Handel, among other composers, was to be performed (Bennett note 1, 484; 18 May 1825 LMWS Bennett Vol. I, 484). Although Handel's "Ode" is not present in The Last Man, it is linked in the text to Haydn's Creation

[210] Barbara Calamari and Sandra DiPasque explain that St. Cecilia's legend has brought about great works of art (36). When her *Acts* were being translated from Latin near the beginning of the Renaissance period, there was a misinterpretation in the passage that says 'While musicians played at her nuptials, she sang only in her heart to God', which led to the belief that she performed on an organ during her nuptials. (Calamari and DiPasque 36). This mistranslation led to the myth that she had the ability to play all instruments and that it was she who invented the organ (Calamari and DiPasque 36). As a result, she became the "patron saint" of "music and poetry" (Calamari and DiPasque 36). Calamari and DiPasque maintain that the Renaissance was the period when artists began to paint Cecilia accompanied with musical instruments (36). In England, St.Cecilia's day was commemorated with many musical performances, and great musical and poetic compositions were dedicated to her by artists, painters, and writers such as Raphael, Handel, and Chaucer (Calamari and DiPasque 36). Calamari and DiPasque point out that even today it is not unusual for musicians to pray for her help for a successful musical performance (36).

[211] Barbara Witucki explains that Handel's lyrics for his musical piece are an "adaptation" of Dryden's "Song for St. Cecilia's Day" (206).

[212] August 3 & October 5 & December 11 1823 (LMWS Bennett Vol. I, 359 & 392 & 408-409).

because both musical compositions address the beginning of the world and because Handel's "Ode" paves the way for Haydn's Creation. The birth of creation in Haydn's Creation recalls Handel's "Ode", in which heavenly harmony is essential to the birth of the world. Magda Marx-Weber argues that, in the opening section of Handel's "Ode", heavenly harmony shapes chaos into order, which "already anticipates the opening section of Haydn's *Creation*" (6). The cosmology that Handel's Ode depicts has as its heart the music of the spheres. Furthermore, Barbara Witucki explains that, in the "Ode", St. Cecilia's playing of the organ "made the angels mistake earth for heaven and made the universe begin to move in harmony." (206).[213] Thus, Handel's "Ode" offers an additional layer of meaning, the music of the spheres, which is useful for understanding the context in which Shelley was exploring the sources of creation at the foot of the Alps.

The spirit of the remaining humans is restored by being in communion with the beauty that is born out of the harmony of the music being played near the Alps. This can be exemplified through one of Shelley's letters that explicitly refers to Wordsworth's theory and confirms the idea that she was participating in the poetic theory of the Romantic era. As mentioned earlier, in his letter to Thomas Love Peacock on 9 of November 1818, PBS describes Raphael's painting, which depicts the shattering of earthly instruments under the powerful effect of Cecilia's music that has been overtaken by the heavenly music of angelic

[213] Witucki quotes the following lines from the "Ode":

> But bright Cecilia rais'd the Wonder high'r;
> When to her ORGAN, vocal Breath was giv'n,
> An Angel heard, and straight appear'd
> Mistaking Earth for Heav'n.
> GRAND CHORUS
> As from the Pow'r of Sacred Lays
>
> The Spheres began to move,
> And sung the great Creator's Praise
> To all Ore bless'd above;

(Myers 110). (*Quoted in Witucki* 206-207).

singing. Although Shelley makes no direct reference to Raphael's St. Cecilia, she discusses another of Raphael's pictures—"The Adoration of the Magi". Shelley says:

> the radiant beauty here expressed, strikes a chord in my soul—all harmony, all love. It is not the art of the painter I admire; it is his pure, exalted soul, which he incarnated in these lovely forms. I remember Wordsworth's theory, that we enter this world bringing with us 'airs from heaven,' memories of a divine abode an angelic fellowship which we have just left, that flake / by flake fall from our souls as they degenerate and are enfeebled by earthly passions. Raphael seems to confirm this theory; for in his early pictures, there is a celestial something absent from his latter, a beauty not found on earth—inspiring as we look, a deep joy, only felt in such brief moments when some act of self-sacrifice exalts the soul, when love softens the heart, or nature draws us out of ourselves, and our spirits are rapt in ecstacy, and enabled to understand and mingle with the universal love. (Rambles 191)

She does not specifically refer to music in this description; however, in order to convey her enthusiasm, she uses the phrase "strikes a chord in my soul", which has the word "chord", a musical term. Moreover, Percy's translation of Plato's Symposium could help to enlighten Shelley's sense of how beautiful Raphael's "The Adoration of the Magi" is to her and how it is "all harmony, all love". In his translation of the "Symposium", PBS writes, "But harmony is symphony: symphony is, as it were, concord…Music is then the knowledge of that which relates to Love in harmony and rhythm." (The Platonism of Shelley 427). In relation to this quote, Jean de Palacio writes: "Plato's text could but strengthen his (PBS's) beliefs in the conformity between Love and Music, both aiming at communion performed in harmony"

("Music and Musical Themes" 358). The beautiful is a form of harmony, of which derive both music and love. For Shelley, self-sacrifice, nature, and love enable the self to reach a state of enthusiasm, and it is this enthusiasm that opens the door to universal love within the self. In relation to what Shelley terms "Wordsworth's theory" in the above passage, Moskal explains, "Mary Shelley refers to Wordsworth's 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality,' II. 62-4: 'trailing clouds of glory do we come / From God, who is our home' (Rambles note d, 191). In other words, being in a state of enthusiasm facilitates access to universal love and offers a glimpse of our prenatal state, as Wordsworth's "Ode" suggests. Likewise, in Valperga, Euthanasia says, "I may be mistaken; but music seems to me to reveal some of the profoundest secrets of the universe; and the spirit freed from prison[214] by its charms, can then soar, and gaze with eagle eyes on the eternal sun of this all-beauteous world" (348). This "secret" links Shelley's view of music with universal harmony, of which love and the spirit of beauty are part. Similarly, Lionel says that while writing, he would listen to music, which would help him achieve greater inspiration:

> If I left the woods, the solemn music of the waving branches, and the majestic temple of nature, I sought the vast halls of the Castle, and looked over wide, fertile England, spread our beneath our regal mount, and listened the while to inspiring strains of music. At such times solemn harmonies or spirit-stirring airs gave wings to my lagging thoughts, permitting them, methought to penetrate

[214] The word "prison" also recalls Wordsworth's "Ode. Intimations of Immortality", in which the speaker says, "Our birth is but a sleeping and a forgetting. / The soul that rises with us, our life's star, / Hath had elsewhere its setting / And cometh from afar. / Not in entire forgetfulness, / And not in utter nakedness, / but trailing clouds of glory do we come / From God, who is our home. / Heaven lies about us in infancy! Shades of the prison-house begin to close / Upon the growing boy" (lines 58-68). Although maturing means being overtaken by the "prison-house", the cares of life that make us forget our initial abode among the eternal, for Shelley, music is able to put us back in touch with this immortality.

> the last veil of nature and her God, and to display the highest beauty in visible expression to the understanding of men. (The Last Man 120)

Through music, inspiration reaches such a height that it seems to offer, once again, access to the secret key of the universe found in universal harmony. Inspiration is drawn from the universal sounds existing in nature. Morrison writes:

> Clearly, the musical resonances of such passages reinforces Mary Shelley's Romantic assertion of nature as God's creation, while she also declares that the mind takes flight into an ethereal plain; it is the intangible essence of music that can push a mind beyond the confines of language. ("Listen While You Read" 156)

It is the ethereal nature of music that allows for inspiration to be freed from the boundaries of language. This is apparent in Lionel's creative process, which mirrors Shelley's own method of inspiration. In a letter to Leigh Hunt on the 5th of October 1823, Shelley writes:

> as I listen to music (especially instrumental) new ideas rise & develop themselves, with greater energy & truth that [than] at any other time—thus I am becoming very fond of instrumental music of which before I was more careless—singing confines ones thoughts to the words—in mere playing they form a song for themselves which if it be not more in harmony with the notes at least is more so with ones tone of mind. (LMWS Vol. I Jones 272)

The absence of words in instrumental music releases Shelley's creative flow, which helps her achieve greater communion with harmony. Given the number of references that she has in this novel to music, it is probable that she was inspired by music while working on this novel, especially universal harmony. In relation to the previous passage, Morrison writes:

> Music obviously serves as inspiration, and she treats it here as a wholly separate and separable mode of contemplation than that of language. Interestingly, the music inspires the language for her and enables her mind's expression, since music without words 'speaks' to her 'tone' of mind more than the constructive union of words and sound. (165 "Listen While You Read")

As Morrison observes, instrumental music stimulates not only Shelley's but also Lionel's, creative thinking. Instrumental music is closer to universal harmony because it is not restricted by words and, thus, leads to greater inspiration. In light of PBS's translation and his understanding of Plato's Symposium, De Palacio suggests, however, that inspiration is forever fleeting:

> So that the evanescence of Music and Love might be ascribed, last of all, to their having their common origin in Intellectual Beauty, in the 'awful loveliness' which floats unseen among us, scarcely ever pausing in this our sublunar world, and always keeping on the verge of departure. ("Music and Musical Themes" 359)

The music being heard at the foot of the Alps suddenly befalls on them and on the scenery like the evanescence of the spirit of beauty itself. At the view of the Lake Leman and upon overhearing music, Adrian and Lionel feel great enthusiasm. Because enthusiasm, like inspiration, is short-lived, it has to be experienced before it fades away. The transitory nature of inspiration is explained by PBS in Defence of Poetry:

> Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, 'I will compose poetry.' The greatest poet even cannot say it: for the mind in creation is a fading coal, which

> some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness: this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our raptures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure. Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conception of the Poet. (Defence of Poetry 30)

Although the ideal represented by the inspiration can never be completely reproduced, its remnants in the mind of the poet have creative potential. Even though their enthusiasm is transient, it does not change its momentary significance and healing effect.[215] & [216] Morrison writes, "Mary Shelley's frequent musical references suggest an underlying theme of soul-lifting; in a novel despairing of existence, music takes human spirits to another level, one upon which comfort for sorrows can be found." ("Listen While You Read" 152-153).Thus, in light of the Shelleys' view of music and harmony, it can be argued that the beauty that is produced

[215] While they are listening to the music coming from the rural church, Lionel says "music, 'silver key of the fountain of tears'" (The Last Man 328). As McWhir notes, this line is from PBS's "A Fragment to Music" (The Last Man note 6, 328). The reference to this poem suggests that music has both the power to stir enthusiasm and to bring healing: "Where the spirit drinks till the brain is wild / Softest grave of a thousand fears, / Where their mother, Care, like a drowsy child, / Is laid asleep in flowers" ("A Fragment: To Music"; Poetical Works lines 2-5; 541). Although only the first line is quoted in the The Last Man, Shelley draws from the rest of the poem to convey the healing effect that music has upon them when they arrive at the foot of the Alps. In addition, after the death of her husband and her return to London, Shelley writes in a letter to Leigh Hunt on December 11th 1823: "My great consolation here is music" (LMWS Vol.I Bennett 408).

[216] Similarly, Shelley writes to Marianne and Leigh Hunt on July 27th of 1823, "My heart is a park well walled in with many doors. Many alas! Have been locked too long—but Music is the master key to all of them" (The Letters of Mary W. Shelley Vol. I Jones 234).Once again, Shelley point out that music has the power to move her into enthusiasm. In fact, Shelley suggests in Valperga that the inspiration that music brings allows for a feeling with the transcendental. This is apparent when Euthanasia says that music "like a voice from a far world, to tell you that there are depths of intense emotion veiled in the blue empyrean, and the windows of heaven are opened by music alone" (Valperga 348).

out of the harmony of Haydn's Creation enables the remaining survivors of the plague to reach a state of inspiration and enthusiasm that puts them in communion with universal love.

Although I have found no direct reference in Shelley's writings about the music of the spheres, I assume that she would have been acquainted with the concept through her reading of Cicero, Milton, Dante, and PBS's Queen Mab as well as his reading of Sir Thomas Browne's Religio Medici. Haar notes that many intellectuals esteemed and explored "Plato's Pythagorean universe" (40). Most notably, there was Cicero who modeled his "Somnium Scipionis" on Plato's view of the music of the spheres (Haar 40). Haar writes, "For Cicero it is the motion of the spheres that produces the 'great and pleasing sound' of the universe" (40). It is very probable that Shelley read Cicero's "Somnium Scipionis" since in one of her letters to Thomas Jefferson Hogg in November 1824, she asks Hogg if she can borrow from him Cicero's works (LMWS Vol. I, Bennett 454). Also, in her Journals, she refers several times to Cicero.[217] In addition, the editors Paula R. Feldman and Dana-Scott Kilvert note in "The Shelley's Reading List" that Mary Shelley had read "Somnium Scipionis" in 1817 (Journals Vol. II, 642). In this work, Africanus's reply to his son's question about what produces the powerful and pleasant sound that he hears is an illustration of the music of the spheres:

> That is produced, he replied, by the onward rush and motion of the spheres themselves; the intervals between them, though unequal, being exactly arranged in a fixed proportion, by an agreeable blending of high and low tones various harmonies are produced… But this mighty music, produced by the revolution of the whole universe at the highest speed, cannot be perceived by human ears,

[217] Journals Vol. I p. 241 and Vol. II p. 486 & p. 488.

> any more than you can look straight at the Sun, your sense of sight being overpowered by its radiance. ("Somnium Scipionis" 271 & 273).

It is, therefore, evident that she would have been knowledgeable about the music of the spheres through her reading of Cicero. James A. Notopoulos argues that PBS would have been exposed to the "sphere-music, as explained in the myth of Er" by his reading of Milton (110). The same can be argued for Shelley given her comprehensive reading of Milton as revealed in "The Shelleys' Reading List" by the editors Feldman and Scott Kilvert in Journals. In addition, it is possible that Shelley would have learned about Pythagoras from her husband. As early as December 24, 1812, PBS ordered Pythagoras from a bookseller. Frederick L. Jones points out that Pythagoras's writings are non-existent; however, Notopoulos indicates that he could have received a "traditionally interpreted Pythagoras", in which subjects such as 'catharsis", "immortality of the soul", "mystical doctrines", and the "music of the spheres' would have been treated (The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley 482; The Platonism of Shelley 81). Another intellectual who was interested in Pythagorean ideas was Sir Thomas Browne. Shelley notes on the 14th of March 1815 in their Journals that Percy "reads Religio Medici" aloud (Vol. I, 69). This means that Shelley would have been familiar with Pythagoras's doctrine of the music of the spheres by hearing PBS's reading of Browne's Religio Medici. Besides Browne, Shelley would have been acquainted with the music of the spheres by her reading of Dante's "Paradiso"[218]:

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[218] In her Journals, in Rambles, and in a Letter to Leigh Hunt Shelley quotes a passage from Dante's "Paradiso" that speaks about fleeting inspiration (Journals 569; Rambles 123; LMWS Jones Vol. II 283). The editors Feldman and Scott-Kilvert offer this translation by Henry Francis Cary of the passage as:
As one, who from a dream awaken'd, straight,
All he has seen forgets; yet still retains
Impressions of the feeling in his dream;
E'en such am I: for all the vision dies,
As 'twere, away; and yet the sense of sweet,

So much of heaven was fired, it seemed to me,

With the sun's blaze that never river or rain

Widened the waters to so great a sea.

The new sound and the great light made me fain

With craving keener than had ever been

Before in me, their cause to ascertain. (Canto I "Paradiso" lines 79-84)

Laurence Binyon writes in his explanatory preface of Canto I of Dante's "Paradiso" in The Divine Comedy: "Dante and Beatrice are suddenly transported to the sphere of fire, between the earth and the moon. Dante is so 'transhumanized' that he is now able to hear the music of the spheres; but at first he is bewildered, not understanding, till Beatrice explains that he has left the earth behind." (366). However, the most eminent instance of the music of the spheres in Shelley's life would have been her own husband's Queen Mab. In this poem, the Fairy reassures the Spirit that in the future there is hope that earth will be in harmony with the universe and that the music of the planetary spheres will be heard:

Then thus the Spirit spoke:

It is a wild and miserable world!

Thorny and full of care,

Which every fiend can make his prey at will.

O Fairy! In the lapse of years,

Is there no hope in store? ...

The Fairy calmly smiled…

That sprang from it, still trickles in my heart.
Thus in the sun-thaw is the snow unseal'd ;
Thus in the winds on flitting leaves was lost
The Sibyl's sentence. *Paradiso* XXXIII, II. 58-66 (The Journals 569, note 1;).

> Oh! rest thee tranquil; chase those fearful doubts, …
>
> But the eternal world
>
> Contains at once the evil and the cure…
>
> How sweet a scene will earth become!
>
> Of purest spirits a pure dwelling-place,
>
> Symphonious with the planetary spheres;
>
> When man, with changeless nature coalescing,
>
> Will undertake regeneration's work.. (Queen Mab VI. 11-16 & 23 & 26 & 31-32 & 39-42)

Thus, there is ample evidence that Shelley would have had at the minimum a rudimentary learning about the music of the spheres.

As I have argued, Shelley makes an indirect reference to the music of the spheres by quoting Milton's "l'Allegro" in her letter to Hunt; however, a form that derives from the music of the spheres and that is alluded in the narrative is *musica coelestis*. The music that the remaining companions overhear at the foot of the Alps reflects the transition of classical ideas about music and the universe into *musica coelestis* in Christian belief. Alberto Ausoni explains, "Many elements of the classical conception of music, such as the idea of music as an image of the creation of the cosmos and its continuous, orderly self-organization, were handed down to medieval civilization and adapted to Christian theology." (10). Thus, music and the origins of the universe have been closely linked in theories of cosmology. Ausoni continues, "Developed by Saint Augustine and Boethius, the concept of *harmonia mundi* (harmony of the spheres) was progressively transferred from the planets to the Christian heaven to represent the harmonious rapport between God and his creatures" (10). The Jewish religious view that the

universe is filled with presence of angels together with Dionysius the Aeropagite's angelic hierarchies transformed the music of the spheres in the Middle-Ages into *musica coelestis,* a notion that holds that the celestial spheres are filled with the music of the angels (Haar 41; "Music of the Spheres" The Oxford Music Online n.p.). This concept is represented in Dante's *Paradiso*. (Haar 41; "Music of the Spheres" The Oxford Music Online n.p). Indeed, in Dante's "Paradiso", the following line is an example of *musica coelestis*: "From choir to choir I heard Hosanna rolled" (line 94 Canto XXVIII 515). Through Dante, Shelley would have, thus, known not only about the music of the spheres but also about *musica coelestis*. *Musica coelestis* is also present in Vincent Novello's musical score of Haydn's Creation. On December 11 1823, Shelley writes to Hunt, "He (Novello) has made me a convert to Haydn—Do you know the piece, 'A new healed World—in his Creation; what a wonderful stream of sound it is" (LMWS Vol. I. Bennett 408). Since it is through Novello's influence that she acquired a taste for Haydn, it is most likely that she would have heard his adaptation of Haydn's Creation and, consequently, would have been cognizant of *musica coelestis*:

> In rosy mantle appears, by music sweet
>
> Awak'd
>
> The morning young and fair
>
> From heaven's angelic choir
>
> Pure harmony discords on ravished earth (Novello's edition of Haydn Creation iii & 107-108).

The harmony produced by the angels is *Musica coelestis*. This angelic symphony is also reflected in the narrative of The Last Man. Lionel says:

> Music—the language of the immortals, disclosed to us the as testimony of their existence…thou camest upon us now, like the revealing of other forms of being; and transported as we had been by the loveliness of nature, fancying that we beheld the abode of spirits, now we might well imagine that we heard their melodious communings. (The Last Man 328)

Although Shelley uses the word "spirits" not angels, the word "abode" in "abode of spirits" indicates that she means angels because she will be employing that term again in Rambles. Inspired by Wordsworth's "Ode. Intimations of Immortality", Shelley uses the word "abode" to discuss how enthusiasm is akin to the soul's antenatal communion with angels in Rambles. She writes, "memories of a divine abode an angelic fellowship" (Rambles 191). Therefore, *musica coelestis* is contained in the cosmology that Shelley is presenting. In another instance of relating her travels in Rambles, more specifically while describing the Lake Of Grumden, she says that in such isolated places the human need to imagine a transcendental realm is mostly present: "It is easier for the imagination to conjure such up in spots untrod by man, so to people with love and gratitude what would otherwise be an unsentient desert" (Rambles 242). She adds that humans are not merely contended to accept life's cycle but seek for the presence of spirits: "But this does not satisfy us, who are born to look beyond / the grave, and yearn to acquire knowledge of spiritual essences" (Rambles 242). In The Last Man, Lionel's sense that they are beholding "the abode of spirits" when they arrive at the foot of the Alps can be better understood by taking into account Shelley's statement, in Rambles, that there is the human desire to fill with "spiritual essences" what would otherwise be an "unsentient desert". It is therefore no coincidence that Shelley would have the characters' journey to the Alps lead to the "abode of spirits", as if it is Shelley herself yearning to find her husband's spirit at this

site where they shared so much of their creative inspiration, as their Journal and their collaborative writing on History show.

Let us now turn to the third part of my paper where I will explain how the music of the spheres is complicated by Necessity. Although the remaining companions left on earth feel their spirit soothed by the music being played at the foot of the Alps, the effect is only temporary because they are brought back to harsh reality by Necessity, which molds time and the destiny of each individual life. Haar explains that it is by recounting the Myth of Er in The Republic that Plato offers more extensive detail about the music of the spheres (39). In The Republic, Plato presents the story of a brave fighter, Er, who was killed in a combat but was granted the chance to see the afterworld and to come back to relate his experience (Haar 39). Haar explains that Er saw, in the afterlife, the movement of the planets being directed by the spindle of Necessity and a siren singing a note simultaneously with each planet's motion; harmony was produced by the collective singing of all the sirens (39). Similarly, Ausoni writes, "Plato, in *The Republic*, described a universe in which the celestial spheres are kept in motion by the uninterrupted melodies of the Sirens, in accordance with the designs of the goddess of Necessity (Ananke)." (10). Indeed, in Plato's Republic, the music of the spheres is described as being made by sirens and by the daughters of Necessity, the Fates:

> And the spindle turned on the knees of Necessity, and up above on each of the rims of the circles a Siren stood, borne around in its revolution and uttering one sound, one note, and from all the eight there was the concord of a single harmony. And there were three others who sat round at equal intervals, each one on her throne, the Fates, daughters of Necessity, clad in white vestments with filleted heads, Lachesis, and Clotho, and Atropos, who sang in unison with

> the music of the Syrens, Lachesis singing the things that were, Clotho the things that are, and Atropos the things that are to be. And Clotho with the touch of her right hand helped to turn the outer circumference of the spindle, pausing from time to time. Atropos with her left hand in like manner helped to turn the inner circles, and Lachesis alternately with either hand lent a hand to each. (Republic X 841)

What is peculiar in the myth of Er is that the music of the spheres is contingent on Necessity. By holding the spindle of the universe, Necessity creates an ordered universe out of chaos. Joscelyn Godwin explains:

> Plato shows them to us in the Myth of Er as Necessity, holding the spindle of the cosmos on her knees, and her three daughters, the Fates who turn the whorls of the universe and sing of past, present and future. By holding the World-Axis, Necessity creates Space, for the Axis is a line and hence the first development of the primal, dimensionless point into a geometric figure with two ends. This is the birth of opposites to which our world is 'of necessity' subject. Her daughters Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos create Time in its triple aspect, and with it spin and cut the thread of each mortal life. (74)

Thus, the daughters of Necessity, the Fates, shape time and weave each person's destiny. The inescapable dominion of Necessity is reflected in Shelley's The Last Man. Lionel says, "Mother of the world! Servant of the Omnipotent! Eternal, changeless Necessity! Who with busy fingers sittest ever weaving the indissoluble chain of events!—I will not murmur at thy acts" (312 The Last Man). According to the world-view presented by Lionel, "Necessity is a servant of the Omnipotent", which means that Necessity is not merely randomness or accident

but is subordinate to God's design, and it has been, in its "changeless" nature, predestined since the dawn of times. For Lionel, just as in the myth of Er, it is Necessity that is responsible for each person's fate.

There is a paradox in the myth of Er because the beauty that is created out of harmony is also dependent on Necessity. This conflict is also represented in Shelley's narrative. The beneficial impact that universal harmony could have on the human spirit is restrained by the sovereignty of Necessity. Plato writes in "Timaeus" that music is meant to rectify any conflict within the soul and to help the soul achieve greater inner-harmony ("Timaeus" 1175). Although the music that is reflected by universal harmony has an impact on the well-being of the remaining human beings in The Last Man, its effect is only temporary because Necessity causes a disharmony between God and humans and their hopes of redemption. Chernaik argues, "The myth of the music of the spheres is similarly double-edged, suggesting both the hope of transcending earthly limitations and the powerful obstacles that confine us within 'the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould' (39). Thus, the suggestion of the music of the spheres in the text represents the human desire to meet the creator in face of the uncertainty that death causes; however, Necessity prevents transcendence from this material world. At the foot of the Alps, the remaining humans are spiritually enraptured by the beauty of the landscape of the Alps and the music, and it is also here that untameable Necessity finally yields to the primordial forces present in the Alps. Lionel says, "From this moment I saw plague no more. She abdicated her throne, and despoiled herself of her imperial scepter among the ice rocks that surrounded us" (The Last Man 332). However, the hard reality of death still strikes them soon after the disappearance of the plague, reminding them of the inescapable dominion of Necessity. For instance, after they have left the Alps and the plague has stopped, Lionel says,

"Still and for ever did the earth roll on, enthroned in her atmospheric car, speeded by the force of the invisible coursers of never-erring necessity." (The Last Man 336).[219] The fact that Lionel says "never-erring necessity" means that Necessity never ceases to shape time and life.

In the remaining pages of this section of my chapter, I will be presenting three possible explanations on the role of Necessity in the novel. The first is that Necessity represents Chaos and cannot be directed by man or Divine power. The second plausible idea is to accept Lionel's point of view that Necessity is decreed by Divine Will. The last alternative is that given the fact that Lionel's account is a reconstruction of the Sibyl's prophecy, the narrative is only one potential prediction of the future of humanity among other possibilities.

Even though Shelley probably never read Plato's Republic, there are many similarities between Plato's view of Necessity and Shelley's in The Last Man. This may be because she was influenced by PBS's understanding of Necessity. Anne McWhir notes that the quotation "Mother of the world! Servant of the Omnipotent!", in The Last Man, echoes Percy's line in Queen Mab: "Necessity! thou mother of the world!" ("Queen Mab" 6.198; The Last Man note

[219] Shelley emphasizes to a greater degree the laws of mutability in the 1831 edition of Frankenstein. In contrast to the 1818 edition of the novel, Dufour explains "en révisant son édition de *Frankenstein*, après la mort de son mari, Mary Shelley souligne davantage la fragilité de l'homme au sein de l'univers" (60). This is apparent, in the 1831 edition, by a greater contrast between the immutability of the Alps composed of granite and the destiny of man who cannot escape the laws of mutability. Indeed, Marilyn Butler notes that Mary Shelley added this passage to the description of the Alps in her 1831 edition:

> I spent the following day roaming through the valley. I stood beside the sources of Aveiron, which take their rise in a glacier, that with slow pace is advancing down from the summit of the hills, to barricade the valley. The abrupt sides of vast mountains were before me; the icy wall of the glacier overhung me; a few shattered pines were scattered around; and the solemn silence of this glorious presence-chamber of imperial Nature was broken only by the brawling waves, or the fall of some vast fragment, the thunder sound of the avalanche, or the cracking, reverberated along the mountains of the accumulated ice, which, through the silent working of immutable laws, was ever and anon rent and torn, as if it had been but a plaything in their hands. (Frankenstein "Appendix B" 221)

The unchangeable mighty nature of the Alps renders man who is subject to the laws of mutability more vulnerable. In her 1818 edition, mutability was already an element that was present in the narrative. Frankenstein exclaims: Alas! why does man boast of sensibilities superior to those apparent in the brute; it only renders them more necessary beings. If our impulses were confined to hunger, thirst, and desire, we might nearly be free; but now we are moved by every wind that blows, and a chance word or scene that word may convey to us" (Frankenstein Butler ed. 75-76). Mutability is part of the devastating actions that result from Necessity.

48, 312). This allusion to PBS's "Queen Mab" suggests that, while writing The Last Man, Shelley had in mind PBS's interpretation of Plato's representation of Necessity. McWhir further indicates that PBS's note to this line is:

> He who asserts the doctrine of Necessity means that contemplating the events which compose the moral and material universe, he beholds only an immense and uninterrupted chain of causes and effects, no one of which could occupy any other place than it does occupy, or act in other place than it does act. (312, note 48)

In PBS's approach, Necessity is a result of cause and effect. Timothy J.A. Clark explains that PBS's notion of the "Doctrine of Necessity" as presented in "Queen Mab": "Shelley's essay expounds a necessitarian and deterministic theory of causality. According to this, any action or event in either the natural or the human world must be understood as an inevitable and necessary effect of the total chain of events in the universe that preceded it" (Encyclopedia of Romanticism 408). Clark and Leighton[220] have pointed out how PBS's view of Necessity was drawn from David Hume; however, it is also likely that his conception of Necessity was derived from ancient classical culture. In relation to Percy's note, the editors, Geoffrey Matthews and Kelvin Everest, explain that PBS "is quoting Holbach I 59n.: 'Platon dit que la matière & la nécessité est la mère du monde'" ("Queen Mab" note vi 198; 329). Matthews and Everest also explain that "Holbach may have in mind *Timaeus* 48A: 'For the generation of this universe was a mixed result of the combination of Necessity and reason' (i.e. a combination of given materials and a shaping intelligence" ("Queen Mab" 329, note vi, 198). However, Matthews and Everest suggest that this may have been a misinterpretation since "Plato

[220] See Clark in Encyclopedia of Romanticism p. 408 and Leighton p.62.

nowhere specifically identifies matter with Necessity (by which he seems to have meant 'randomness')" ("Queen Mab" 329, note vi 198). Plato's Timaeus does not appear in Jones's "The Shelleys' Reading List"; therefore PBS must have drawn his understanding of Necessity out of Holbach's erroneous interpretation of Plato's Timaeus. In "Queen Mab", PBS writes:

> Necessity! Thou mother of the world!
> Unlike the God of human error, thou
> Requirest no prayers or praises; the caprice
> Of man's weak will belongs no more to thee
> Than do the changeful passions of his breast
> To thy unvarying harmony…
> …all that the wide world contains
> Are but thy passive instruments, and thou
> Regardst them all with an impartial eye
> Whose joy or pain thy nature cannot feel,
> Because thou hast not human sense,
> Because thou art not human mind. (vi. 198-203 & 214-219)

In PBS's version, Necessity is impassive to human suffering or happiness and unaffected by man's supplications. The Fairy, who knows the past, present, and future, says to the Spirit, "The future, from the causes which arise / In each event, I gather" (I. 172-173). In other words, she knows the future from the causes that have occurred in the past; thus, Necessity arises from past events like a domino effect. However, in Shelley's The Last Man, the Plague is a material manifestation of Necessity, and it is an uncontrollable result over which humanity has no power to affect. Paley argues, "any rational explanation of the destruction of humankind is

conspicuously absent—the plague that kills everyone in the world save four and then stops remains at least as arbitrary as Calvinist predestination" (110). Indeed, humanity is helpless in face of the destruction that the plague causes. In explaining Plato's notion of Necessity, Francis McDonald Cornford writes:

> Necessity cannot be wholly persuaded by Reason to bring about the best result conceivable. Reason must be content to sacrifice the less important advantage and achieve the best result attainable. This last instance illustrates the truth of Galen's observation that the Demiurge is not strictly omnipotent. In arranging the world he could not group physical qualities in such a way as to secure all the ends he desired. (176).

Drawing from Cornford's explanation, the plague may represent an element of Necessity that resists being molded by divine plan. In fact, according to Lionel's understanding, Necessity has agency. Cornford continues:

> These considerations affect the status of the other factor, the craftsman's materials, or the chaos which confronts the Demiurge and which he is said to 'take over in a state of disorderly motion' and reduce, so far as he can, to order…Chaos can only stand for some factor in the world as it exists in all times. The question then will be whether this factor is, now and always, in some measure chaotic and disorderly, or is, now and always, completely subordinate to the ends of Reason… in my opinion, the body of the universe is not reduced by Plato to mere extension, but contains motions and active powers which are not instituted by the divine Reason and are perpetually producing undesirable effects. (176).

These chaotic elements that produce undesirable outcomes may be the reason why Lionel has difficulty reconciling a benevolent God with the tragedy that happens to humanity: "Our name was written 'a little lower than the angels' and, behold, we were no better than ephemera" (The Last Man 311). Paley holds that in relation to the existence of the plague "causality seems nonexistent" (120). Although I share Paley's point of view, I believe that the reason why there is no explanation for the cause of the plague is due to Necessity. It is possible that redemption for humanity is part of God's plan but that Necessity—or Chaos—is an element that is not completely subordinate to divine will. Cornford writes, "necessity is opposed to purpose, and linked with spontaneity, coincidence, chance" (166). In the same line of thinking, chaos has slipped through and has caused devastation in The Last Man. Thus, the plague may not be decreed by the Creator but a factor that is not completely in control by divinity. In light of this interpretation, Shelley's notion of Necessity goes beyond PBS's view of cause and effect and comes closer to the original idea in Plato's Timaeus. This means that because the plague is outside any purpose or outside of reason, Necessity seems to be in fact chaos—something that does not come under the dominion of reason or under the complete rule of the Omnipotent.

However, this argument that Necessity is Chaos is complicated when considering that the narrative is a prophecy by the Sibyl. If Necessity is defined as Chance, then how can the Sibyl have foreknowledge of an occurrence that does not follow the established laws of Nature? Cicero, basing his argument on reason, maintains that it is impossible to prophesy Chance. Cicero writes:

> How can anything be foreseen that has no cause and no distinguishing mark of its coming?...if the prophecies just mentioned and others of the same class are

> controlled by some natural and immutable law such as regulates the movements of the stars, pray, can we conceive of anything happening by accident or chance? Surely nothing is so at variance with reason and stability as chance. Hence it seems to me that it is not in the power even of God himself to know what event is going to happen accidentally and by chance. For if He knows, then the event is certain to happen; but if it is certain to happen, chance does not exist. And yet chance does exist, therefore there is no foreknowledge of things that happen by chance. But if you deny the existence of chance and assert that the course of everything present or future has been inevitably determined from all eternity, then you must change your definition of divination, which you said was 'the foreknowledge of things that happen by chance.' For if nothing can happen, nothing befall, nothing come to pass, except what has been determined from all eternity as bound to happen at a fixed time, how can there be such a thing as chance? And if there is no such thing as chance, what room is there for that divination, which you termed 'a foreknowledge of things that happen by chance'? And you were inconsistent enough, too, to say that everything that is or will be is controlled by Fate!...Of what advantage is to me divination if everything is ruled by Fate? (Divinatione, II, 17-20; 389-391)

Indeed, how can the Sibyl prophesy what is not known to God himself? One possible interpretation is that God knows that chance will take over, but he is unable to battle it. In this version of Shelley's view of Necessity, Creation fails humanity. Man is lost because his

destiny is dependent on Necessity. However, Necessity eventually yields to the primordial forces of Creation present at the foot of the Alps, and, thus, the world is healed.

The second possible interpretation of the role of Necessity in the narrative is offered by Lionel himself. For Lionel, Necessity is not mere chance but is governed by the laws of the Omnipotent. After losing everyone on earth, he ponders on suicide; however, he refrains himself because he believes that he has survived the plague not by accident but because of Divine will. He says:

> It was not cowardice that withheld me; for the true fortitude was to endure; and death had a soothing sound accompanying it, that would easily entice me to enter its desmene. But this I would not do. I had, from the moment I had reasoned on the subject, instituted myself the subject to fate, and the servant of necessity, the visible laws of the invisible God—I believed that my obedience was the result of sound reasoning, pure feeling, and exalted sense of the true excellence and nobility of my nature. Could I have seen in this empty earth, in the seasons and their change, the hand of a blind power only, most willingly would I have placed my head on the sod, and closed my eyes on its loveliness for ever. But fate had administered life to me, when the plague had already seized on its prey—she had dragged me by the hair out the strangling waves—By such miracles she had bought me for her own; I admitted her authority, and bowed to her decrees. (The Last Man 362)

It is clear that for Lionel fate is not "blind power" but what has been preordained by the Creator. In Lionel's understanding, Necessity is not outside of reason since the Omnipotent governs fate. Although he verges on despair, he preserves his life by being guided by

reason.[221] In her Journal, Shelley writes on October 26th of 1824, "I have pondered for hours on Cicero's description of that power of virtue in the human mind wh renders man's frail being superior to fortune" (Vol. II; 486). Shelley then proceeds to quote the passage in her Journal. The editors, Feldman and Scott Kilvert, explain that the quote is from Cicero's De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum. The editors offer a translation of the passage:

> Further, Reason possesses an intrinsic element of dignity and grandeur, suited rather to require obedience than to render it, esteeming all the accidents of human fortunes not merely as endurable but also as unimportant; a quality of loftiness and elevation, fearing nothing, submitting to no one, ever unsubdued. (Journal Vol. II; note 2; 486)

This emphasis on reason offers the freedom to rise above the difficult circumstances of life in spite of Necessity. In a similar line of thought, William Godwin writes in Political Justice:

> He therefore who regards all things past, present, and to come, as links of an indissoluble chain, will, as often as he recollects this comprehensive view, find himself assisted to surmount the tumult of passion; and be enabled to reflect upon the moral concerns of mankind with the same clearness of perception, the same firmness of judgement, and the same constancy of temper, as we are accustomed to do upon the truths of geometry. (174).

As in Cicero, Godwin emphasizes reason despite of Necessity. Since it is during the period when she was working on The Last Man that Shelley was meditating on the passage quoted

[221] Although the music of the spheres in Shelley's novel is consistent with an aesthetic of enthusiasm, it is not outside reason due to its basis in science. Leo Spitzer indicates that what distinguishes the music of the spheres is that both "science" and "mythology" play a central role in its definition (414). Spitzer maintains that although the music of the spheres was indistinguishable to humans, the fact that it could be comprehensible with mathematics made it graspable by "human reason" (414).

above from Cicero, her reflections from this passage are reflected in Lionel. In De Divination, Cicero writes: "Surely nothing is so at variance with reason and stability as chance" (Divinatione II 389; 18).[222] In other words, reason signifies order, and it is the opposite of chance and chaos. It is, therefore, reason that offers Lionel some degree of control over his tragic circumstances. Similarly, enthusiasm does not prevent the occurrence of Necessity, but it allows Adrian to have the fortitude necessary to prevent chaos among people: "Order, comfort and health, rose under his influence, as from the touch of a magician's wand" (The Last Man 197). It is because Adrian's enthusiasm is contained within reason that he is able to maintain order and prevent chaos in English society.

I will now turn my discussion to the possibility that Necessity is not absolutely predetermined in the narrative since the Sibyl's prophecy is one possible interpretation among other possible ones. Although neither the imagination nor enthusiasm have the power to change fate, they can allow for greater freedom of choice within the confines of Necessity. As witnessed in Lionel's narrative, Necessity, unfortunately, cannot be moulded by the imagination nor by enthusiasm. If the plague is predetermined, then, as Cicero suggests, prophecy is of no advantage to humanity since what is fated will occur, and there are no actions that humanity can take to prevent the destruction that the plague causes. However, Lionel's narrative is the product of the interpretation of the fragments of the Sibyl's prophecy by the narrator of the introductory chapter. In order to make a consistent narrative, this reconstruction of fragments involves filling in the gaps by using the imagination. The narrator who interprets the Sibylline Leaves says, "I have been obliged to add links, and model the

[222] Also quoted earlier

work into a consistent form" (The Last Man 4). Timothy Ruppert argues that the Sibyl's prophecy invites for "imaginative transformation". Ruppert writes:

> Literary prophecy in fact disallows the closure of history to possibilities. Thus Adam and Eve depart Eden with 'the World…all before them' (XII.646) and so enter history, as Loewenstein suggests, 'with humility and courage' (125). Despite what Adam has seen with his eyes and Eve has seen in her dreams, hope continues because history promises myriad possibilities rather than a single, inevitable outcome. Seemingly paradoxical, what the Archangel reveals to the first people matters less as a description of the future than as a summons to the human imagination to seize historical opportunity, to dream and to enact new realities for humankind. The prophecy, in other words, encourages imaginative transformation." (148).

Because the prophecy is a reconstruction of the Sibylline Leaves by the narrator, the prophecy may invite for "imaginative transformation", as Ruppert argues, since it is only a reconstruction of fragments, and it is not unalterable; there is, thus, space for humanity to imagine other alternatives by reconstructing the Sibylline Leaves. This implies that Necessity is not the sole ruler of the future but that humanity has the Freedom to influence the future through the will.

The tremendous losses that Adrian and Lionel undergo due to the devastating effects of the plague cause them to grope for a meaning to life. The existential questions that torment Lionel are also present in Percy's "On Life". Indeed, in his essay, Percy writes:

> What is life? Thoughts and feelings arise, with or without our will, and we employ words to express them. We are born, and our birth is unremembered,

> and our infancy remembered but in fragments. We live on, and in living we lose the apprehension of life… For what are we? Whence do we come, and whither do we go? Is birth the commencement, is death the conclusion of our being? What is birth and death?...Man is a being of high aspirations 'looking both before and after', whose 'thoughts wander through eternity', disclaiming alliance with transience and decay, incapable of imagining to himself annihilation, existing but in the future and the past, being not what he is, but what he has been and shall be. Whatever be his true and final destination, there is a spirit within him at enmity with nothingness and dissolution. (The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley Vol. VI 193-194)

This struggle against "annihilation", "nothingness", and "dissolution" is reflected in Lionel; he strives to understand how God can be indifferent to humanity's extinction and, at the end of the narrative, he persists by embarking on a quest to meet another survivor even though it is obviously improbable. Similarly, there is a feeling of despair that threatens to befall on Adrian when his enthusiasm is in danger of leaving him:

> I have done my best; with grasping hands and impotent strength, I have hung on the wheel of the chariot of plague; but she drags me along with it, while, like Jaggernaut, she proceeds crushing out the being of all who strew the high road of life. Would that it were over—would that her procession achieved, we had all entered the tomb together! (The Last Man 310).

Explaining the term "Jaggernaut" used in the above passage, McWhir writes, "Robert Southey, The Curse of Kehama describes a procession of this incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu: 'On Jaga-Naut [the worshippers] call, / The ponderous Car rolls on, and crushes all. / Through

flesh and bones it ploughs its dreadful path' (14.5)" (note 44; 310 The Last Man). Southey describes the worshippers offering themselves as sacrifice to the god by letting themselves be crushed by the wheels of Jaggernaut: "Prone fall the frantic votaries in its road, / And, calling on the God, / Their self-devoted bodies there they lay / To pave his chariot way" (The Curse of Kehama 19). In The Last Man, the imagery of the wheel, is a metaphor for fate—daughter of Necessity. The Juggernaut is Necessity's destructive instrument that is manifested in the plague, meant to sacrifice all. The image of the chariot and its destructive force is also found in PBS's "The Triumph of Life":

> So came a chariot on the silent storm
> Of its own rushing splendour, and a Shape
> So sate within, as one who years deform,
>
> …Upon the chariot-beam
> A Janus-visaged Shadow did assume
> /…/
> All the four faces of that charioteer
> Had their eyes banded; little profit brings
>
> Speed in the van and blindness in the rear,
> Nor then avail the beams that quench the sun,—
> Or that with banded eyes could pierce the sphere
> Of all that is, has been or will be done;
> So ill was the car guided—but it passed

With solemn speed majestically on.

/…/

One falls and then another in the path

Senseless—nor is the desolation single,

Yet ere I can say w*here*—the chariot hath

Passed over them—nor other trace I find

But as of foam after the ocean's wrath

Is spent upon the desert shore (86-106 & 159-164).

The covered eyes of the "Janus-visaged Shadow" suggest how fortune blindly operates. Mark Sandy explains that an "indifferent chaos" is represented by the "banded eyes" of the Janus-visaged Charioteer (3).The existential questions that PBS poses in "On Life" are also reflected in "The Triumph of Life".[223] In the poem, the human desire to find a meaning to life is conveyed. Lloyd Abbey argues, "'The Triumph of Life' may be regarded as a poetic portrayal of metaphysical skepticism…the poem casts severe doubt, not only on the possibility of discovering ultimate reality, but also on the validity of the concept of reality itself" (85). In a similar line of thought, Mark Sandy writes about the human need to find the purpose of life:

> Such a desire leads to a belief that beyond the chaos of existence there is a metaphysical realm that lends life a purpose… Both Shelley's narrator and the young Rousseau believe that an absolute, unquestionable and transcendental meaning can be imposed upon life, and they strive to establish its ultimate

[223] In fact, Jerrold E Hogle argues that "The Triumph of Life" is a continuation of PBS's essay "On Life" (158).

> significance …Contemplation of an ideal metaphysical realm turns out not to be valuable in itself, but for what is revealed about the human world of contingencies and transience. (1-2)

This search for a "transcendental meaning" is also present in Shelley's narrative. Faced with the loss of all their loved ones and of all humankind, Lionel and Adrian experience the despair of the destruction of meaning to an ordered understanding of life. In the "Introduction" of The Last Man, the narrator's discovery of the Sibylline Leaves suggests an initial desire to discover ultimate truths to life's questions. However, from the narrator's interpretation of the Sibylline Leaves, a narrative is constructed, in which the characters themselves are faced with life circumstances that reduce them to seek for absolute answers about existence. Indeed, it is at the foot of Alps where Haydn's music was being played that Lionel asks, "O for some Delphic oracle, or Pythian maid, to utter the secrets of futurity! O for some Oeudipus to solve the riddle of the cruel Sphynx!" (The Last Man 333). Thus, Lionel's yearning for a prophecy to comprehend the existential anxieties that torment him but also the frame narrator's interpretation of the Sibylline Leaves suggest a desire to find absolute truths. Jerrold E. Hogle maintains that "The Triumph of Life" suggests that there is a need to "embrace more fluid alternatives" to fixed meanings. Hogle writes:

> But the response in The Triumph has become what both the narrator and Rousseau behold from different angles: a large-scale canvas on which a panoply of seekers after absolutist 'shadows' are revealed to be generators and interpreters of reflexive metaphors who only choose to be oppressed by a desire to unify and obey them. (163)

This suggestion to "embrace more fluid alternatives" is also present in The Last Man. The reader has to leave open the possibility that the narrator's reconstruction of the Sibylline Leaves is one interpretation among other possible alternatives.

Because the prophecy has the potential to be altered by being reconstructed by another interpreter, creation, like the Sibyl's prophecy, has the prospect of being recreated through time. Since the Sibylline Leaves can be interpreted across time and in different contexts, neither the time nor the events of the prophecy established by the frame narrator are definitive. There is the idea that poetry just as prophecy recreates itself through the ages. This is what PBS was arguing in Defence:

> Poets, according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called, in the earlier epochs of the world, legislators, or prophets: a poet comprises and unites both these characters. For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and fruit of latest time. Not that I assert poets to be prophets in the gross sense of the word, or that they can foretell the form as surely as they foreknow the spirits of events: such is the pretence of superstition, which would make poetry an attribute of prophecy, rather than prophecy an attribute of poetry. A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not. The grammatical forms which express the moods of time, and the difference of persons, and the distinction of place, are convertible with

> respect to the highest poetry without injuring it as poetry. (Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck ed. 112)

Just as poetry may be reinterpreted across time and place and remain relevant, the prophecy in Shelley's novel transcends time and speaks to the personal concerns and reality of the narrator at the opening of the novel. Ruppert explains:

> the few pages comprising Shelley's 'Introduction' transform the notion of unidirectional history that Verney's chronicle of the future advances for some readers. If the frame narrator feels little worry after her look at the twenty-first century (a point of concern for Audrey A. Fisch), it is because she knows she has simply gazed into one possible future, and she realizes that what she has seen is best interpreted as a general delineation of human truths rather than as a precise description of what awaits humankind in the years ahead. (148)

Because poetry and prophecy recreate themselves across generations, the meaning that the frame narrator gives to the Sibylline Leaves is only one possible prediction of the future among others. In view of this explanation, Necessity does not have absolute dominion over historical events; instead, humans have some degree of freedom in shaping the future.

Although historical time comes to an end in the novel, absolute time carries on. There is a difference between concrete measured time and abstract time in the narrative. M. D. Akhundov's explanation about the role of Time in religion can be helpful in understanding the notion of Time in The Last Man. Akhundov writes:

> "What is the religious person's dream of the future? He hopes to free himself from time! Religion acquires its power over the souls of humans by promising them the ability to conquer time: the ancient Egyptian's blissful fields of Ialy,

> the Christian's Paradise, the Islamic Djjaanna, and the Buddhist's Nirvana are all located not in time but in eternity. Arising simultaneously with the world, time is the form of existence of the world between creation and the day of judgment. For example, the Heavenly City, as described in Revelation, needs neither the sun nor the moon for light. Night will not exist there, for sacred time lacks any temporal reckoning. After all, it is the sun and the moon, the alternation of day and night, on which relative time is measured in the ordinary world, whereas sacred time (the prototype of Newton's absolute time) participates in the Godhead…A clear cut distinction between time and eternity, which in scientific terms appears as a division into relative and absolute time (which are in turn based on the attributive and substantial notions), represents a significant advance in the development of generalizing and abstract thought" (84).

In view of Akhundov's argument, it can similarly be said that in The Last Man there are two kinds of time—historical time and absolute time. It is relative time that comes to an end in the novel, but absolute time, of which Nature is a part, continues to exist unaffected by the plague. In the narrative, while man disappears from the earth, Nature remains intact from the ravages caused by the plague. Stephen Jay Gould explains that in time's cycle no natural phenomenon is singular. Gould writes:

> Under the metaphor of time's cycle in its pure form, nothing can be distinctive because everything comes round again—and no event, by itself, can tell us where we are, for nothing anchors us to any particular point in time, but only (at most) to a particular stage of a repeating cycle. (80).

Indeed, there is a lack of the expected 'sign of times' that would announce the end of the world in the narrative. Nature's cyclical time does not register the disappearance of man as a significant event. Gould maintains that James Hutton, Charles Lyell and other of their contemporary geologists had attempted to interpret fossils. Some geologists argued that some fossils showed evidence of extinguished animals.[224] Lewis H. Lapham writes:

> By the end of the 18th century scientists had come to agree that the odd designs encased in ancient rock formations were the meager remains of myriad forms of prehistoric animals. Mary Shelley (1797-1851) seized on the implication for the human species in her novel. (144)

As Lapham suggests, out of the evidence represented in fossils of extinguished animals, Shelley could have imagined that the human race will also eventually disappear from the earth. Indeed, this is not improbable because in An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?, Immanuel Kant would address this idea based on newfound evidence from fossils that the human race could possibly disappear from earth just as previous plant and animal species had been eradicated by nature's revolution. Kant writes:

> provided at least that there does not, by some chance, occur a second epoch of natural revolution which will push aside the human race to clear the stage for other creatures, like that which (according to Camper and Blumenbach[225]) submerged the plant and animal kingdoms before men ever existed. For in the

[224] See Chapter three and four in Gould.

[225] In A Manuel of the Elements of Natural History by I. F. Blumenbach, Blumenbach writes, "Oryctology, or the Doctrine of Petrifications, in a strict sense, and when properly considered and applied, forms a very important part of Mineralogy, inasmuch as it casts great light upon Geogeny, upon the various succeeding and more or less general catastrophes which have taken place in our Globe…The term petrification, in its most extended sense, is applied to those animals and plants which have perished in such catastrophes" (Sect. XVIII 401). Blumenbach both identifies fossils "merely resembling creatures at present existing" and "perfectly unknown creatures of the primitive world" (Sect. XVIII 404). These fossils that point out the disappearance of previous existing plant and animal species also suggest that human kind can also become extinguished in a natural catastrophe.

> face of the omnipotence of nature, or rather its supreme first cause which is inaccessible to us, the human being is, in his turn, but a trifle. (161).

If, like Kant, Shelley considers the possibility that the human race could disappear from earth because of a natural revolution, could it be that she also imagines that Nature's cyclical process will recreate another human race in the future? If so, the book that Lionel writes at the closing of the narrative is not in vain because it may be read by this future human race, which Nature will reinvent. Furthermore, Lionel's narrative closes with the end of historical time, Lionel says:

> I had made a rough calculation, aided by the stars, by which I endeavoured to ascertain the first day of the new year. In the old out-worn age, the Sovereign Pontiff was used to go in solemn pomp, and mark the renewal of the year by driving a nail in the gate of the temple of Janus. On that day I ascended St. Peter's, and carved on its topmost stone the aera 2100, last year of the world! (The Last Man 365)

Even though historical time terminates, Nature still continues to exist unaffected by the disappearance of humanity. Ruppert argues, "Although the natural world's deep time is unaffected by the plague—animals live on, the seasons change, the seas maintain their magnificence and the mountains their grandeur—human history, in Verney's eyes, seems to have ceased." (150). Drawing from Ruppert's discussion, "Deep time" is part of cyclical time of which nature is a part and which continues on despite the end of historical time.[226]& [227]

[226] Ruppert explains that "Karen Hadley writes that the predictability and regularity of time as measured by clocks and watches—and as taxed by William Pitt in the late 1790s (693)—led Romantic authors to ascertain a conflict between what William Deresiewicz, in *Jane Austen and the Romantic Poets*, calls 'Bergsonian *temps*-linear, unidirectional clock-time' (37) and what John Wyatt, in *Wordsworth and the Geologist*, refers to as *deep time*, that is, the unquantifiable time of the earth and the cosmos (157)." (152-153).

Furthermore, the Alps were believed to be composed of granite, which in turn was associated with primeval natural setting. John Wyatt writes:

> 'Granite' in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was, for the non-specialist, a term of convenience for what were deemed to be the oldest most 'primitive' rocks. Their characteristic features were their hardness and their crystalline detail, with no evident layering and no evidence of fossils. A clinching piece of identification of a rock as granite was its occurrence in 'primitive' landscapes. (21)

Because the granite with its asbence of the marks of the passage of time and its association with primitive landscape was seen as immutable, the Alps are connected to absolute time. The healing effect that the Alps bring to both Adrian and Lionel is because they are connected to the origins of the world and, thus, are linked to eternal time. Relative time comes to an end in Lionel's narrative, but memory retains loved ones in eternity because absolute time is immutable. In fact, Lionel says to Idris, "Let us not through security in hereafter, neglect the present. This present moment, short as it is, is a part of eternity, and the dearest part, since it is our own unalienably. Thou, the hope of my futurity, art my present joy." (The Last Man 268). Lionel presents concrete time as ephemeral; however, meaningful moments are, for him, outside relative time and inscribed in eternity. The idea that Eternity escapes concrete time is also emphasized in Shelley's "The Choice":

> No more! No more! What tho' that form be fled

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[227] John Wyatt explains that J. S. Gould has offered two different types of geological conceptions that bring to light the investigations of geologists from the early to the mid-nineteenth century (156). Wyatt says that Gould uses the metaphor of time's arrow and time's cycle. Wyatt writes, "First, he (Gould) uses the metaphor of the arrow; a bow shot has a beginning and pursues a trajectory, leading directly to an end…Gould's second metaphor is the cycle, a sequence where what is destroyed forms the material for a new formation, which in turn is destroyed and so on" (156).

My trembling hands shall never write thee—dead—

Thou liv'st in Nature—love—my Memory,

With deathless faith for aye adoring thee—

The wife of time no more—I wed Eternity" (Journals Vol. II; 493)

This poem was written by Shelley after PBS's death. For Shelley, even though PBS is dead, he continues to be present in Nature. In other words, he is now absent from concrete time, but lives in Eternity. Akhundov's study is useful in understanding Shelley's sense that she is no longer "The wife of time" and that she "wed(s) eternity". Nature exists in absolute time, and, thus, PBS has exited relative time, but has entered eternal time in Nature. Likewise, in The Last Man, absolute Time will still continues to exist despite the end of relative Time.

The desolation that the plague brings causes a destruction of an ordered understanding of the universe. In its wavering between Platonic ideals and nihilism, the narrative, in The Last Man, suggests that there are no absolute truths to be found—what both the readers and Lionel are left with is this infinite longing to have a meaning to the random and cruel circumstances of life. Mellor argues:

> The Last Man thus opens the way to twentieth-century existentialism and nihilism…But as the author of the first fictional example of nihilism, Mary Shelley expresses the emotional desolation that such philosophical conviction brings as has no writer since. (Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fictions, Her Monsters 169)

Although I do agree with Mellor that there is nihilism in the narrative, I think that it is not an absolute nihilism. Romanticism's focus on subjectivity resulted in a loss of the certainty of a meaningful and ordered universe.[228] Paley maintains:

> These references to a sacred order no longer believed to exist are among the ghosts that haunt Mary Shelley's narrative…Such ghostly manifestations seem introduced not only for the purpose of demonstrating that there is no supernatural explanation but also in order to produce natural ones so trivial as to bring out the insufficiency of all natural explanations. (118 &119)

The loss of an ordered understanding of the universe is particularly reflected in Merrival, the astronomer, who after spending his life studying the universe becomes deranged at the devastation that the plague causes. After he loses his family to the plague, he was "possessed by the delirium of excessive grief" (The Last Man 239). Lionel says, "The old man felt the system of universal nature which he had so long studied and adored, slide from under him, and he stood among the dead, and lifted his voice in curses" (The Last Man 239). Thus, Merrival's mental health suffers because he can no longer count on an ordered universe.[229] Similarly, Lionel, mourning the loss of his loved ones, ponders upon the meaning of humanity's existence in relation to the universe.

The last issue to consider in this chapter is how the Sibyl's prophecy corresponds to a known genre. The Sibylline Leaves found by the frame narrator belong to a genre known as the apocalyptic oracle. The Sibyl's prophecy foresees the awful randomness decreed by Necessity that will extinguish humanity from earth. The Sibylline Leaves that the narrator and

[228] See Jamie James's Chapter 1.
[229] This is in contrast to Adrian: "in the midst of desolation Adrian had preserved order; and each one continued to live according to law and custom" (238).

his companion find appear to have their origin in many regions among which is Babylonia and Egypt. Maricarmen Gómez explains:

> The books of the Sibylline Oracles, all belonging to Judaic-Christian culture, numbered twelve. They were written between the second half of the second century BC and the first half of the third century AC, and come from an extensive geographical territory ranging from Egypt to ancient Babylonia. They are preserved in manuscript copies dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and contain a mixture of three types of material: fragments of oracles from far back in ancient times, fragments of oracles of Jewish origin, and Christian writings dealing above all with Christ. (El Canto De La Sibila II 9)

In Shelley's The Last Man, the Sibylline Leaves that the narrator of the "Introduction" reconstructs are written in many languages, among which is "ancient Chaldee" (3). The fact that the Sibylline Leaves were written in "ancient Chaldee" associates them to the Chaldeans' cosmology of a belief in the harmony of the spheres. Indeed, the Oxford Music Online indicates that "The Greeks attributed ideas about a harmonious universe to the 'Chaldeans' or 'Babylonians'" (n.p.). Because one of the languages in which they were written was "ancient Chaldee", the Sibylline Leaves announce a prophecy that is tied with a cosmology of a universal harmony with Necessity as its pilot. Lionel says:

> Sudden an internal voice, articulate and clear seemed to say:—Thus from eternity it was decreed: the steeds that bear Time onwards had this hour and this fulfillment enchained to them, since the void brought forth its burthen. Would you read backwards the unchangeable laws of Necessity? (The Last Man 311-312).

The Sibylline Leaves unveil the fate of humanity as it has been established by Necessity since the origins of the world. M. D. Akhundov explains what Necessity meant for the Ancient Greek culture:

> Situated in time, humans could not see beyond the temporal horizon of the present, but from their vantage point in eternity—'above' and outside of time—the immortal gods could view all of time at once. In a state of trance or ecstasy, the soothsayers, oracles, Pythians, and mantics that were a permanent feature throughout the history of the ancient Greek culture could gain a glimpse into the future. The world of the future, in other words, was precisely located in time and accessible to madness. Gods or oracles could reveal to the hero what tomorrow had in store, but this changed little in the order of things, because everything was determined by the stern laws of necessity. (82)

Likewise, in The Last Man, Shelley draws from the classical world the idea that the Sibyl in her state of enthusiasm foretells the future but that the laws Necessity cannot be overturned. In the cave of the Cumaean Sibyl, the frame narrator discovers that these fragments of prophetic texts are written in many languages; therefore, it is possible that the sibyl of Cumae in her enthusiasm spoke many languages or that the Sibylline Leaves may have been written by many Sibyls. Because the prophecy that announces the extinction of humanity is sinister, Shelley's Sibyl could have been, hypothetically, the apocalyptic Sibyl Erythrea rather than the Sibyl of Cumea. Although the authorship of the Sibylline Books is generally attributed to the Sibyl of Cumea, it may be that the books were actually written by the Sibyl Erythrea. In fact, according to Micheline Galey, the Sibyl Erythrea is the double of the Sibyl of Cumea (167). Also, Gómez explains, "La légende veut qu'à une certaine occasion la Sibylle de Cume offrit à

Tarquin le Superbe, dernier roi de Rome (534-510 av. J.C.) des livres dans lesquels avaient été recueillies les prophéties de la Sibylle Erythraea" ("Le Chant de la Sibylle" n. p.). Thus, the Sibyl of Cumea may have had in her possession the prophecies of the Sibyl of Erythrea. Micheline Galey explains the importance of this apocalyptic Sibyl:

> Elle demeure aux yeux de l'Église—nous l'avons vu—la plus grande, 'la plus divinement inspirée' (Mâle 1898, 432) celle qui a annoncé la seconde venue du Christ sur terre, en vue du Jugement dernier. Associée, en cette première phase (XIIIe-XVe siècles), au message funeste de sa prophétie, elle est perçue comme la prophétesse 'apocalyptique'....elle tient de la main gauche son rouleau prophétique déployé, alors que le bras droit se replie sur la poitrine d'un geste qui semble exprimer le recul et l'effroi. Son corps et son visage se détournent, comme s'il fuyait une réalité qui fait peur—réalité contenue dans le message qu'elle doit transmettre, comme malgré elle. Le secret qu'elle dévoile aux humains est lourd à porter. (108)

The idea that the message that the apocalyptic Sibyl Erythrea transmits to humans is horrifying is consistent with the dark prophecy of the Sibylline Leaves in The Last Man. What is terrifying in the prophecy of Shelley's Sibyl is that there is apocalypse, without the redemption promised by Christianity. Moreover, Lionel who is writing his book for future generations is unknowingly addressing nineteenth-century readers.[230] His narrative becomes like the Sibyl's voice announcing the end of humanity. He unveils the dire destiny of man by imagining that the earth will react through natural disasters to the annihilation of man. He says:

[230] Ruppert also addresses the notion of time in Lionel's narrative. Ruppert writes, "Time collapses throughout Verney's account of the pandemic that devastates humankind in the late twenty-first century" (151).

> Arise, black Melancholy! Quit thy Cimmerian solitude! Bring with thee murky fogs from hell, which may drink up the day; bring blight and pestiferous exhalations, which, entering the hollow caverns and breathing places of earth, may fill her stony veins with corruptions, so that not only herbage may no longer flourish, the trees may rot, and the rivers run with gall—but the everlasting mountains be decomposed, and the mighty deep putrify, and the genial atmosphere which clips the globe, lose all powers of generation and sustenance. Do this, sad visaged power, while I write, while eyes read these pages. And who will read them? Beware tender offspring of the re-born world—beware fair being, with human heart, yet untamed by care, and human brow, yet unploughed by time—beware, lest the cheerful current of thy blood be checked, thy golden locks turn grey, thy sweet dimpling smiles be changed to fixed, harsh wrinkles! Let not day look on these lines, lest garish day waste, turn pale, and die. Seek a cypress grove, whose moaning boughs will be harmony befitting; seek some cave, deep embowered in earth's dark entrails, where no light will penetrate, save that which struggles, red and flickering, through a single fissure, staining thy page with grimmest livery of death. (The Last Man 340-341)

In the tradition of apocalyptic accounts made by the Sibyl, Lionel uncovers the secret of humanity's fate by imagining that natural catastrophes will accompany the reading of his tale by future readers. His tale is like the dark prophecy of the Sibyl who announces the horrors that will befall humanity at the end of times. In fact, Gómez explains that Sibyls prophesied the future by observing natural phenomena ("Le Chant de la Sibylle" n.p.). Gómez states that

St. Augustine maintained to have read the Sibyl of Erythrea's verses, which he then proceeded to translate from the Greek into Latin (El Canto De La Sibila II 10). In order to illustrate how devastating natural disaster will be on the Day of Judgment, it is worthy to quote an extract from St. Augustine's version:

> The radiance of the sun shall vanish and the harmony of the spheres shall cease; / The heaven shall shake and the moon shall set; / the hills shall collapse and the valleys shall rise. / There shall be nothing sublime or elevated in human things. / The mountains shall be flattened down with the fields, and the vastness of the sea / shall swamp all; the earth, split open, shall perish; / fire shall dry up springs and rivers. (Qtd. in El Canto De La Sibila II 10)

Thus, St. Augustine's account shows how a multitude of natural catastrophes will take place at the end of times. Although the plague, in The Last Man, eradicates humanity from earth, nature continues to exist independently of man. Lionel witnesses the extinction of all of humanity but without the expected cataclysms that would accompany the end of the world. Because this lack of the expected response from the earth towards man's disappearance adds to Lionel's loss of an ordered universe, he compensates for it by conjuring Nature to respond while he writes his narrative. Although I have no evidence that Shelley knew about the Sibyl Erythrea or read St. Augustine, she must have had some knowledge of the manner that the apocalyptic Sibyl is known to have given her dark tale because she imitates the Sibyl's genre by having Lionel predict how natural disasters will accompany the revelation of the terrible conclusion of his narrative to future readers.

Although the prophecy is similar to the horrifying prediction that the apocalyptic Sibyl makes for humanity, it lacks the expectation that the apocalypse will be accompanied by

natural disasters. Because the absence of natural disasters adds to Lionel's sense of a loss of an ordered understanding in the universe, he remedies for this lack by summoning nature to react with natural catastrophes and predicting, just like a Sibyl, that future generations who will read his narrative of the disappearance of man will experience extreme terror.

From Exaltation to Regulation: The Different Meanings of Enthusiasm in Mary Shelley's Writings

It is evident from her journals and letters that Mary Shelley had an admiration for Madame de Staël. Shelley's appreciation for Corinne is manifested by the number of times she records in her journals reading the novel (in 1815, 1818, and again in 1820). On several occasions, she proposed to her publisher, John Murray, to write Madame de Staël's biography. For instance, on the 25th of May of 1830, in a letter to Murray, she expressed this desire. Even though her offer was repeatedly declined, she persisted until she finally was able in 1839 to publish her version of Madame de Staël's life in the second volume of her book Lives (LMWS Vol. 2 Bennett 293, note 5). In one of her letters, Shelley makes a reference to Madame de Staël's definition of enthusiastic response towards what is considered beautiful. This suggests Shelley's admiration for Madame de Staël's theory of enthusiasm in De l'Allemagne. She remarks:

> Madame de Staël has observed that there are many things, and those among the most lovely and delightful in the world, which unless we admire with enthusiasm we do not admire at all: we must be, as it were, instinctively attracted and charmed, or the spell is wholly without avail, and there is no medium between fervent admiration and cold distaste. (LMWS Vol. I. Bennett 523)

Her comment points out her own interest in the concept of enthusiasm. In this letter, she ardently defends Giovanni Battista Velluti because she believes that his talented singing deserves appreciation, yet he has been in her opinion an unjustly treated artist in England. She is protecting Velluti because through his artistic achievement he has managed to inspire her with enthusiasm: "in his mode of linking note to note in a manner that chains the ear and

touches the heart" (LMWS Vol. I. Bennett 517). In this chapter, I will thus be tracing the manner by which Shelley explores the theme of enthusiasm through characters that undergo fits of inspiration in her literary works, but also in her travel writings, letters, and Journals. Furthermore, Madame de Staël's Corinne had an impact on Shelley's own conception of female character construction. In Valperga and in The Last Man, Shelley constructs Corinne-inspired characters with improvisatory skills and with melancholic inclinations. However, she remains critical of the slow-suicide by which Madame de Staël makes Corinne die.

Despite some of the negative characteristics that Shelley gives to Madame De Staël, she demonstrates respect for the literary achievement that the author has attained in the concluding chapters on enthusiasm in De l'Allemagne. Her approving remarks on Madame de Staël's theory of enthusiasm suggest Shelley's own investment in the concept of enthusiasm, an interest that she shared with her husband, PBS. In her writings, Shelley explores the different meanings of the term enthusiasm that include the Platonic and the mystical. This means that the concept of enthusiasm is seen, in both Valperga and the Last Man, in the supernatural beliefs of Bindo, in the religious fervor shown in Beatrice's prophecies, and in the devotional mysticism that both Beatrice and Perdita have for the object of their love, but also in the poetic inspiration derived from the principles of liberty by which both Adrian and Euthanasia are guided. There is as well an emphasis on a Platonic enthusiasm for the beautiful and the sublime as connected with nature. Both her fictional and travel writings are an occasion for Shelley to analyze the process of inspiration through the depiction of the interconnectedness in nature.

Corinne-Inspired Characters

Shelley constructs Corinne-inspired characters, whose enthusiasm is prone to melancholia, madness, and suicidal tendencies. In the seventeenth century, Lord Shaftesbury would identify how the enthusiasm found in the passion of love is connected with melancholia. Lord Shaftesbury writes,

> There is a melancholy which accompanys all Enthusiasm. Be it Love or Religion (for there are enthusiasms in both) nothing can put a stop to the growing mischief of either, till the Melancholy be remov'd and the mind at liberty to hear what can be said against the Ridiculousness of an Extreme in either way" (A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm 21).

Shaftesbury identification of love as a type of enthusiasm that is under the grasp of melancholia is present in Shelley's Valperga and The Last Man. Indeed, Shelley creates characters that like Corinne experience melancholia in their enthusiasm. Furthermore, in Robert Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, symptoms of love are "either of body or mind, paleness, leanness, dryness, &c."(500). The idea that the melancholy associated with romantic love has symptoms that are manifested in the body is present in Corinne who physically deteriorates under her grief. Psychosomatic illness due to lost love is also found in Shelley's depictions of melancholy in her Corinne-inspired characters. Moreover Burton determines the imagination as misleading the affections and causing the body humours to fluctuate. Burton writes, "so that the first step and fountain of all our grievances in this kind, is *laesa imagination*, which misinforming the heart, causes all these distemperatures, alteration and of spirits and humours." (158). The imagination, thus, misguides the enthusiasm of love causing

it to choose wrongly. In Valperga, Beatrice curses at a deity who invents imagination to torture the heart of man. Beatrice says:

> And the imagination, that masterpiece of his malice; that spreads honey on the cup that you may drink poison; that strews roses over thorns sharp and big as spears; that semblance of beauty which beckons you to the desart; that apple of gold with the heart of ashes; that foul image, with the veil of excellence; that mist of the maremna, glowing with roseate hues beneath the sun, that creates it, and beautifies it, to destroy you; that diadem of nettles; that spear, broken in the heart! He, the damned and triumphant one, sat meditating many thousand years for the conclusion, the consummation, the final crown, the seal of all misery, which might set on man's brain and heart to doom him to endless torment; and he created the Imagination. (Valperga 343)

Beatrice feels that her imagination has betrayed her because it caused her enthusiasm of love for Castruccio that led to her fall. Similarly, in Enthusiasmus Triumphatus, Henry More would hold that it is "The enormous strength of Imagination" that is "the Cause of Enthusiasme" (4). For More, it is the imagination that "thus peremptorily engages a man to believe a lie." (4). Therefore, Shelley in writing about the enthusiasm of love that causes melancholy and suicidal tendencies in her characters brings to mind not only Madame de Staël's Corinne but also seventeenth century discourses about enthusiasm as linked to the imagination and to melancholia. In relation the previous quotation, Barbara Jane O'Sullivan writes, "With these words, Beatrice of Ferrara, a heroine in Mary Shelley's second novel, utters a blasphemous condemnation of the Romantic celebration of the imagination" (140). However, I view

Beatrice's statements against the imagination as being linked to dialogues about enthusiasm previous to the Romantics but that have an impact in the nineteenth century.

Although Shelley depicts characters who just like Corinne are vulnerable to madness and are suicidal because of lost love, it is clear from the short biography that she writes of Madame de Staël in Lives that she is disapproving of Madame de Staël's depiction of slow suicide and loss of sanity. In relation to the novels written by Madame de Staël, Shelley criticizes Delphine for its representation of suicide and Corinne for its portrayal of the heroine's incapability of bouncing back from romantic disappointment. She explains that Delphine "was attacked by the French critics as immoral" ("Madame de Staël" 480). Shelley does not wholly disagree with the French critics' views:

> 'Delphine' affords scope, however, for such criticism. She allows that it displays too eager a desire for happiness, the result of young and ardent feelings; but, worse than this, it inculcates no spirit of courage under disaster. Bulwer speaks of 'fortitude, the virtue of the ancients, and resignation, the duty of Christians,' as the chief aim of a philosophic or pious mind: madame de Staël—and in this she is the founder of the Byronic—made the chief feeling of her work impatience of life under sorrow, suicide in despair. ("Madame de Staël" 481)

The fact that Delphine has recourse to suicide is disapproved of by Shelley because it does not show to the reader virtues of patience under difficulty. Shelley explains how she views the role of the writer as having a moral goal, "Sorrow is rife with desperation; we fly to the pages of the sage to learn to bear; and a writer fails in his duty when he presents poison instead of medicine" ("Madame de Staël" 481). Shelley believes that it is the responsibility of the writer

to teach "moral courage" and that it is preferable that a work of literature has as its function a didactic approach ("Madame de Staël" 493).

In addition to Delphine, Shelley also criticizes Madame de Staël's Corinne, for its portrayal of death as a negative coping system for grief. About Corinne, Shelley basically offers the same critique as she does for Delphine—she disapproves of the fact that Madame de Staël portrays Corinne dying of grief after her lover leaves her:

> Madame de Staël was naturally led to portray death as the result of sorrow; for when we are miserable, we are apt to dwell on such as the dearest relief; yet we do not die. The authoress also might wish to impress on men an idea of the misery that their falsehood produces. That is a story as ancients as Dido, and told by Virgil more impressively and beautifully than by any other writer. For the dignity of womanhood, it were better to teach how one, as highly gifted as Corinne, could find resignation or fortitude enough to endure a too common lot, and rise wiser and better from the trial. ("Madame de Staël" 484)

Although Shelley does acknowledge that perhaps Madame de Staël's aim was to teach men how their libertinage leads to disastrous effects, she regrets that Corinne who is so gifted with talent does not have the "fortitude" to go through an experience that happens to many women. She would have preferred to see Corinne overcome her grief and become empowered by the strength in herself.[231] In other words, if Corinne who is so talented and powerful does not have

[231] Through her short story, "The Trial of Love", published in The Keepsake, Shelley offers women an alternative to despair and suicide after the loss of romantic love. There are many parallels between the plots of "The trial of Love" and Corinne, or Italy. Like Corinne who looks after her younger sister Lucille, Angeline, the main heroine of Shelley's short story, acts like an older sister to Faustina. Ippolito, the man with whom Angeline falls in love with, resembles Oswald who is not constant; indeed, upon seeing the younger Faustina with all her ardour, Ippolito abandons his vow to Angeline. The fact that Angeline is all forgiving and is able to receive Faustina who eventually misses Angeline's friendship recalls Corinne who at the end of the narrative advised Lucille and taught Juliet. However, unlike Corinne who dies of a broken-heart, Angeline is able to see beyond the mere

the strength to overcome romantic disappointment, what does the narrative teach other women who may not have Corinne's talents or power? Shelley emphasizes that a work of literature is to be held as a model for the reader.

Despite the fact that Shelley criticizes Madame de Staël for the creation of her heroines' self-inflicted death inclinations, the heroine of Shelley's Malthida also dies of grief, and her death resembles Corinne's slow suicide. Although the cause of her grief is her father's incestuous feelings, she never recovers her willingness to live after she discovers the truth that leads to his death. Like Lionel in The Last Man, she admits that she does not have recourse to suicide in order not to "violate a divine law of nature" (Mathilda 221). She, however, often despairs and verges on suicide. Woodville detracts her attention from hopelessness, but ultimately his friendship and lessons of courage are not sufficient to prevent Mathilda from desiring death. For instance when she is about to die, Mathilda says:

> I take pleasure in arranging all the little details which will occur when I shall no longer be. In truth I am in love with death; no maiden ever took more pleasure in the contemplation of her bridal attire than I fancying my limbs already

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appearances of Ippolito and to perceive his lack of constancy—she becomes a nun and decides that he could not have been the right man for her if he forgot his vow so easily: "Ippolito, also, she saw with calm and altered feelings; he was not the being her soul had loved…Angeline, dedicated to heaven, wondered at all these things; and how any could so easily make transfer of affections, which with her, were sacred and immutable" ("The Trial of Love" 243). This is different from how Madame de Staël constructs Corinne dying of grief and for which Shelley criticized her. Faustina, later in her marriage, was not as happy as she first was because "her husband's light, inconstant nature inflicted a thousand wounds in her young bosom" ("The Trial of Love" 243). Thus, the true character of Ippolito is revealed by the indication that as he was inconstant with Angeline, he is also inconstant with Faustina. The reader can get almost a sense of relief that Angeline did not marry one who would have been emotionally hurting her and can observe how wise Angeline is for seeing that he is not the right person for her. In fact, Angeline overcomes her grief and, in contrast to Faustina, is able to live happily as a nun after her separation with Ippolito: "Angeline had taken the veil in the convent of Sant' Anna. She was cheerful, if not happy" ("The Trial of Love" 243). Thus, unlike Madame de Staël, Shelley constructs an empowering tale for women for lost romantic love.

> enwrapt in their shroud: is it not my marriage dress? Alone it will unite me to my father when in an eternal mental union we shall never part. (Mathilda 244)

Thus, Shelley portrays a character who takes pleasure not only in indulging in her melancholic thoughts about her death but also in planning it. Miranda Seymour explains that after Shelley's young son dies, Godwin, who believed that Shelley had inherited her mother's depressive moods,[232] writes her a letter expressing his worry and attempting to convince her not to indulge in sorrow but rather to retain her fortitude (234). Seymour maintains that when Godwin receives Shelley's manuscript of Mathilda, he becomes greatly upset at Shelley's depiction of the heroine's suicidal inclinations: "Godwin had given her good reasons why she should live. Instead, she sent him a novel which flaunted the idea of death the bridegroom, death the comforter, death the debt-collector" (236). Despite the fact that Shelley criticizes Madame de Staël for depicting a character who does not have the fortitude to live after romantic love fails, it seems that Shelley herself had a degree of attraction to a Byronic character, like Mathilda, who contemplates suicide. Of course, this may have been, as Godwin feared, because of her own inclination towards despondency.

Furthermore, Shelley points out how dangerous it is for women to idolize their love interest. This danger is apparent with Perdita who, as Lionel says, worships Raymond: "She erected a temple for him in the depth of her being, and each faculty was a priestess vowed to his service" (The Last Man 71). Another instance where it is obvious that Perdita reverenced

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[232] Godwin had cause to worry since both her mother and half-sister had attempted suicide. Seymour writes, "Mary Wollstonecraft had made two attempts to kill herself; poor Fanny had succeeded" (234). Indeed, on the 9th of October of 1816, Fanny would write a note announcing her suicide:

> I have long determined that the best thing I could do was to put an end to the existence of a being whose birth was unfortunate, and whose life has been a series of pain to those persons who have hurt their health in endeavouring to promote her welfare. Perhaps to hear of my death will give you pain, but you will soon have the blessing of forgetting that such a creature ever existed. (The Clairmont Correspondence Vol. I. 86)

Thus, Godwin tries to prevent Mary from following her relatives' suicidal tendencies.

Raymond is when she says, "I lived in a temple glorified by intensest sense of devotion and rapture; I walked a consecrated being, contemplating only your power, your excellence" (The Last Man 108). Shelley reveals the risks that women run by offering too much devotion to a partner in a romantic relationship at the expense of forgetting themselves. Thus, Perdita is similar to Corinne who becomes despondent and slowly dies after Oswald abandons her. When Perdita suspects that Raymond, her husband, had been unfaithful to her, Lionel says, "The concentrated pride of her nature, forgotten during her blissful dream, awoke, and with its adder's sting pierced her heart; her humility of spirit augmented the power of the venom" (The Last Man 105). The serpent that pierces the heart is similar to the imagery of the serpent that pierces the flower in Corinne: "Cette belle Corinne dont les traits animés et le regard plein de vie étaient destinés à peindre le bonheur, cette fille du soleil, atteinte pas des peines secrètes, ressemblait à ces fleurs encore fraîches et brillantes, mais qu'un point noir causé par une piqûre menace d'une fin prochaine (Corinne Balayé, ed. 2000, 340).[233] However, in this case, it is Perdita's pride that acts like a snake—it is self-destructive. Lionel says in relation to Perdita's melancholia, "These perplexities and regrets caused her to bathe her pillow with nightly tears, and to reduce her in person and in mind to the shadow of what she had been" (The Last Man 118). Becoming "the shadow of what she had been" bears a resemblance with

[233] Idris too, in The Last Man, has a resemblance to Corinne. When she witnesses how the plague kills people in England on a large scale, Idris's incessant worries about her loved ones have a detrimental effect on her mental and physical health. Lionel recounts, "She described in vivid terms the ceaseless care that with still renewing hunger ate into her soul; she compared this gnawing of sleepless expectation of evil, to the vulture that fed on the heart of Prometheus" (The Last Man 237). Apart from the allusion to PBS's Prometheus Unbound, this passage also recalls Corinne who heart-broken also slowly dies of grief. In addition, in Lodore, Ethel pines away after Villiers leaves her. The narrator says that "Her life became one thought, it twined round her soul like a serpent, and compressed and crushed every other emotion with its folds" (Lodore 240). The theme of madness and serpent imagery due male abandonment is, thus, present in Lodore, just as it is in Madame de Staël's Corinne and Sappho. After Villier's departure, Ethel, like Corinne and Beatrice, reacts physically by showing symptoms of illness, just as she did when her father died: "She grew pale and thin, and her eyes again resumed that lustre which spoke a quick and agitated life within" (Lodore 243).

Corinne's emotional and physical decline after she is abandoned by Oswald. Following her separation from Raymond, Perdita, like Corinne, abandons her art. Lionel says:

> the only accomplishment she brought to any perfection was that of painting, for which she had a taste almost amounting to genius…Her pallet and easel were now thrown aside; did she try to paint, thronging recollections made her hand tremble, her eyes fill with tears. With this occupation she gave up almost every other; and her mind preyed upon itself almost to madness. (The Last Man 119-120).

Like Corinne, her mental state causes her to abandon her genius and to verge on madness.[234]

When she learns of Raymond's exploits in Greece from Adrian, Perdita wishes that she had some career to distract her from the pain that she feels due to her separation from Raymond: "Would that I also had a career! Would that I could freight some untried bark with all my hopes, energies and desires, and launch it forth into the ocean of life—bound for some attainable point, with ambition or pleasure at the helm" (The Last Man 124). Both Oswald in Corinne and Léonce in Delphine join the army when they separate from the women who love them. Thus, both authors, Shelley and Madame de Staël, suggest that men have recourse to a career or have an occupation to engage them and sustain them when romantic love fails, while, from the time of Penelope[235], women pine away because they are home-bound or have less

[234] It is interesting to note that after PBS dies Shelley voices her grief in her Journals by echoing Corinne's own sorrow after her separation from Oswald: "My mind slumbers & my heart is dull—Is life quite over? Have the storms & wrecks of the last years destroyed my intellect, my imagination, my capacity of invention—What am I become?" (Journals 572). Such Passages seem to recall—with their fear of madness and loss of genius—Corinne. Shelley uses her journals as a catharsis to work through her emotions of grief. She uses these allusions to Corinne and other literary works to grieve over the loss of PBS.

[235] Penelope awaited for twenty years the return of her husband Odysseus who had been to the Trojan War (OED).

opportunities outside the domestic sphere. Similarly, when she is in Germany, Shelley writes about the cause of women:

> What lives did the ancient inhabitants of those crumbling ruins lead! The occupation of men was war; that of the women, to hope, to fear, to pray, and to embroider. Very often not having enough of the first in the usual course of their existence, they contrived a little more, which led to an extra quantity / of the second and third ingredients of their lives, and, in the end, to many grievous tragedy. Wayward human nature will rebel against human sloth. We must act, suffer, or enjoy; or the worst of all torments is ours—such restless agony as old poets figured as befalling a living soul imprisoned in the bark of a tree. We are not born to be cabbages. The lady, waiting at home for her husband, either quaked for fear, or relieved the tedium of protracted absence as best she might, too happy if death or a dungeon were not the result. (Rambles 91)

In other words, Shelley is against the lack of occupation that assails women in the early nineteenth century as it leads to mental torture. This suggests that she is aware of how women historically remained behind waiting in agony for what might happen while their husbands went to war.[236]

When Lionel forces Perdita to quit Greece and return with him to England, she commits suicide. Lionel, who acts as the narrator, disapproves of Perdita's suicide. He says that she was:

> the victim of too much loving, too constant an attachment to the perishable and lost, she, in her pride of beauty and life, had thrown aside the pleasant

[236] Shelley herself had a career as a writer to sustain her mental well-being after the death of her children and of her husband.

> perception of the apparent world for the unreality of the grave, and had left poor Clara quite an orphan. I concealed from this beloved child that her mother's death was voluntary. (The Last Man 169)

It can be inferred that behind Lionel's disapproval there is Shelley's own opposition to the act of suicide in face of lost romantic love. In other words, it brings to mind Shelley's "Madame de Staël" in Lives in which she criticizes the author's depiction of Corinne's apathy and slow suicide and says that it would be better for the self-worth of the female gender if she had not portrayed this self-inflicted slow death (484). Thus, for moral and didactic purposes, she disapproves of authors who have their heroines commit suicide because of lost love.

In addition to Perdita, Adrian also brings to mind Corinne by the fact that when he finds out that Evadne does not reciprocate his love, his health fails, and he becomes melancholic, temporarily insane, and almost dies: "By degrees his health was shaken by his misery, and then his intellect yielded to the same tyranny. His manners grew wild; he was sometimes ferocious, sometimes absorbed in speechless melancholy" (The Last Man 36). Later, Adrian, despite the happiness that he has with his group of friends, is often melancholic: "he was the only one visited by fits of despondency; his slender frame seemed overcharged with the weight of life" (The Last Man 71). In this, he resembles Corinne who despite her enthusiasm is capable of falling into great despondency as she herself explains to Oswald, and this becomes apparent especially after Oswald abandons her.

Moreover, the character of Beatrice, in Valperga, bears a resemblance with Corinne's slow death. After Castruccio leaves her, Beatrice undertakes a journey of self-inflicted punishment—a journey that leads her to her death and to madness. Beatrice reminds one of Corinne by the fact that she deteriorates both physically and psychologically after her break-up

with Castruccio. When she reappears after her pilgrimage and period of captivity, "her face, her whole person was emaciated, worn and faded" (Valperga 339). The words "emaciated" and "faded" recall the way Corinne looks after Oswald leaves her. Beatrice, like Corinne, also suffers from a psychosomatic disorder after she is disillusioned by her romantic fantasies with Castruccio: "the most trifling circumstance would awaken her wildest fancies, and fever and convulsions followed" (Valperga 349).[237] As a self-punishment to herself when she was on her pilgrimage, Beatrice says that she "loved to throw off my cloak, to bare my arms, my face, my neck to the scorching sun-beams, that I might sooner destroy a delicacy I despised" (Valperga 356). Leanne Maunu characterizes Beatrice's behavior when she becomes a pilgrim as "self-inflicted violence" (459). Indeed, this self-violence is manifested by the fact that she says that she wants to get rid of the "delicacy" of her skin—it is like she is saying she wants to get rid of what defines feminine beauty and virtue. In fact, in a Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful, Edmund Burke defines "smoothness" "delicacy" and smallness as being characteristics of the beautiful.[238] In Romanticism and Gender, Anne Mellor explains Burke's definition of the beautiful:

> Identifying beauty with the small, the diminutive, pointing out that, 'it is usual to add the endearing name of little to everything we love' (211), Burke revealingly commented that 'we submit to what we admire, but we love what submits to us' (212). The ideal woman, then, is one who engages in a practice of what today we would call female masochism, willingly obeying the dictates of her sublime master. The smoothness of beauty is further associated by Burke with the 'smooth skins' of 'fine women' (213). (108)

[237] It should also be noted that she was tortured and maybe raped during her period of captivity.
[238] See Sect. XIII, Sect. XIV, and Sect. XVI in Burke.

Thus, Beatrice in self-chastisement seeks to eradicate feminine traits of beauty from herself. Shelley would have been particularly sensitive to a Burkean definition of female beauty since her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, had criticized Burke for excluding reason from the qualities that define femininity. In A Vindication of the Rights of Men, Mary Wollstonecraft responds to Burke's definition of beauty and women:

> Nor would it be necessary for you to collect, that if virtue has any other foundation than worldly utility, you have clearly proved that one half of the human species, at least, have not souls; and that Nature, by making women *little*, *smooth*, *delicate*, *fair* creatures, never designed that they should exercise their reason to acquire the virtues that produce opposite, if not contradictory feelings. (80)

Beatrice is uncomfortable with this "delicacy" of her skin, or with what defines the feminine—because in this case it has betrayed her since her love for Castruccio was not reciprocated, and to be loved was, as Wollstonecraft argues, "woman's high end and great distinction!" (A Vindication of the Rights of Men 80). This self-inflicted injury is like a penance that she undergoes to atone her shame but also to nullify her emotional pain. Further evidence that Beatrice is a Corinne-inspired character is when she cries out to Euthanasia: "'Save me!' she cried, 'save me from madness, which as a fiend pursues and haunts me…my lips are bloodless, and my hair quite grey; I am a skeleton without flesh or form" (Valperga 385). This recalls Corinne's physical and mental decline after Oswald leaves her. Given the fact that Shelley criticizes Madame de Staël for making Corinne die of a broken-heart, there is a degree of irony by the fact that Beatrice too does not have the strength to rise above the situation when Castruccio leaves her and dies of grief. However, Shelley is clearly writing a cautionary

tale to other women by showing what happens to a woman when she is carried away by amorous enthusiasm instead of being led by reason.

Similarly, Euthanasia at first reacts at the loss of her romantic relationship with Castruccio in the same manner as Beatrice and Corinne do—by translating her disappointment into a physical illness. However, she recovers from her psychosomatic illness. The narrator says that Euthanasia, "determined to think no more of Castruccio; but every day, every moment of every day, was a broken mirror, a multiplied reflection of his form alone" (Valperga 271). The broken mirror reflects her sense of pain over her broken relationship with Castruccio. It also brings to mind Corinne's shattered and fragmented sense of self due to her failed relationship with Oswald. Unlike Corinne, however, it is important to notice that Euthanasia's sense of self never becomes fragmented after her break-up with Castruccio because she stands by her beliefs and values, as it will be discussed later in my chapter. Still, her initial reaction to the loss of her relationship with Castruccio is that "She became pale, sleepless, the shadow of what she had been" (Valperga 271). This bears a lot of similarities with Corinne who slowly dies of grief.

Euthanasia detects, early on in the novel, how Castruccio's actions are unacceptable to her own value system and, thus, she chooses not to unite her life with his. For instance, when Euthanasia learns that Castruccio had exiled several families from Lucca, the narrator says, "it unveiled at once the idol that had dwelt in the shrine of her heart, shewed the falseness of his apotheosis, and forced her to use her faculties to dislodge him from the seat he had usurped" (Valperga 261). Even though she had truly worshipped him, the appeal he has over her is dispelled when she learns about his unjust actions towards others and towards Beatrice. Shelley unclouds the illusion of the knight in shining armor by showing all of Castruccio's

faults in Euthanasia's eyes. The narrator says that Euthanasia needs from Castruccio "a conformity of tastes to those she had herself cultivated, which in Castruccio was entirely wanting" (Valperga 279). Thus, Euthanasia realizes that Castruccio is not compatible with her. She really did love him, but she comes to understand that love is not infallible—it can be idealized—she is no longer naïve about the unchangeable and unfaltering nature of romantic love. Thus, Euthanasia's character is a reaction to Madame de Staël's depiction of Corinne's slow death, and this can be ascertained by the fact that in Lives, as stated earlier, Shelley criticizes Madame de Staël for creating a character that does not recover from romantic loss.

In addition to the fact that Euthanasia recognizes Castruccio's desire for power as being incompatible with her republican values, she finds the strength to resist him by her awareness and benevolence for the sufferings of others. Euthanasia, like a priestess, had idolized Castruccio through her feeling of the sacred in relation to her love for him.[239] Just as Corinne is referred to as a priestess in Madame de Staël's novel, Euthanasia is also given this title. The narrator says about Euthanasia, "her very person was sacred, since she had dedicated herself to him; but, the god undeified, the honours of the priestess fell to dust. The story of Beatrice dissolved the charm; she looked on him in the common light of day; the illusion and exaltation of love was dispelled for ever" (Valperga 278). This idealization of her love for Castruccio is broken when she realizes that she is not the only one to love Castruccio this way. After Euthanasia's illusions about Castruccio are broken, she recovers from her deep pain: "it was no longer that mad despair, that clinging to the very sword that cut her, which before had tainted her cheek with hues of death" (Valperga 278). Her initial reaction to the dissolution of their engagement is similar to Corinne's slow death; however, she pulls herself through by not

[239] In contrast, Corinne is referred as a priestess belonging to the temple of Apollo because she has access to the sacred through her capability at poetic inspiration and improvisation.

clinging to the pain or to the destructive passion. After the illusion of love passed for Euthanasia, she reassumes her goodness towards others and abandons her self-absorbed preoccupations about her relationship with Castruccio (Valperga 278).[240] There is a greater force in her that pulls her away from hopelessness because instead of dwelling in feelings of melancholy and wallowing in pain, Shelley implies that there are greater virtues such as the importance of duty and the consideration of the welfare of others: "the fountain of selfish tears flowed no more, and she was restored from death to life" (Valperga 279). In this, Euthanasia resembles Adrian in The Last Man, and it can be argued that both characters are moved by a Godwinian mode of ethics, as will be explained later in my chapter.

Although both Beatrice and Euthanasia are similar to the character of Corinne through their love for Castruccio, there are important differences between them that reveal a tension for women between loving unconditionally and loving rationally in romantic relationships. In other words, Shelley represents two different forms of feminine love—one is all forgiving like Beatrice's—the other has conditions such as Euthanasia's love. When Beatrice asks Euthanasia why she separated from Castruccio, Euthanasia replies that his ambition had caused misery and death. In response, Beatrice says, "Forms, forms,—mere forms, my mistaken Euthanasia. He remained, and was not that every thing?" (Valperga 350). Tilottama Rajan refers to Beatrice's conception of Castruccio as a "transcendental ideality" ("Introduction" 34). In other words, Beatrice is convinced that there is an essence in Castruccio that transcends his unjust choices and actions. She believes that her love has the power to eventually change Castruccio's despotism: "my intensity of love would annihilate his wickedness" (Valperga 350). Beatrice is consumed by her enthusiasm for Castruccio whereas

[240] The narrator says, "Her old feelings of duty, benevolence, and friendship returned" (278).

Euthanasia is driven by her enthusiasm for her ideals of liberty which allow her to have a deeper well of inner resources that preserve her through her romantic disappointment. Even though they both show unusual independence as women characters, Euthanasia and Beatrice define their identity differently in relation to the love they have for Castruccio. Shelley's novel, especially in her depiction of Beatrice, reflects how in the nineteenth century, not having many options available, women derived their identity through love whereas men derived it through their careers. Beatrice abandons her visionary career when she gets enamored of Castruccio and loses her identity—as if she cannot define herself outside Castruccio; in contrast, Euthanasia stands by her values, for she does not give up her identity.

The different kinds of enthusiasms

I will now turn to the second part of my chapter, in which I will discuss the different meanings of the term enthusiasm that are present in Shelley's writings. Historically speaking, the term enthusiasm has had different denotative meanings in the English language. The Oxford English Dictionary explains that etymologically the word enthusiasm derives from the Greek word *ενθουσιασμός*, "possessed by a God". Today, the main current sense of the word enthusiasm given by the Oxford English Dictionary has evolved to mean: "Rapturous intensity of feeling in favour of a person, principle, cause, etc.; passionate eagerness in any pursuit, proceeding from an intense conviction of the worthiness of the object." This meaning, however, is different from the 1798 edition of Samuel Johnson's A dictionary of the English language, in which the primary meaning of the word enthusiasm is "A vain belief of private revelation; a vain confidence of divine favour." As noted in Oxford English Dictionary, this sense is currently obsolete. This meaning of the word enthusiasm recalls how the term enthusiasm in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and even sometimes in the nineteenth century

evoked mistrust of religious sects and individuals who claimed to be divinely inspired. Another more positive meaning of the term given in Johnson's Dictionary that is also presently obsolete is: "Elevation of fancy; exaltation of ideas." This meaning is closer to the enthusiasm associated with poetry that I will be discussing in this chapter. It is similar to the definition of enthusiasm as "Poetical fervour" given, by the Oxford English Dictionary and also identified as outdated. In this section, I will primarily examine the now obsolete meanings of the term enthusiasm in order to understand its historical relevance in relation to Shelley's texts. In An Essay on Original Genius, William Duff defines the history of the word enthusiasm. He considers "divine inspiration" to be essential to the poet. Duff writes;

> Sometimes expressions, which have been anciently taken in a good sense, are, by a strange perversion of language, used in a bad one; and by this means they become obnoxious upon account of the ideas, which, in their common acceptation they excite. This is the case with the word ENTHUSIASM, which is almost universally taken in a bad sense; and, being conceived to proceed from an overheated and distempered imagination, is supposed to imply weakness, superstition, and madness. Enthusiasm, in this modern sense, is in no respect a qualification of a Poet; in the ancient sense, which implied a kind of divine INSPIRATION, or an ardor of Fancy wrought up to transport, we not only admit, but deem it an essential one. (170-171)

As Duff points out, the denotation of enthusiasm, in the seventeenth century, had no longer the positive connotation of "divine inspiration" but rather meant a diseased imagination. Susie I. Tucker explains that although Duff believes that the etymological meaning of enthusiasm has validity, commentators of his time and up to the nineteenth century rejected the positive sense

of the word by claiming that "such a state never existed—it was always a false, vain, confidence" (21). The second meaning that Johnson attributes to the word enthusiasm is: "Heat of imagination; violence of passion". Claire Crignon-De-Oliveira explains that this sense points out to a medical or natural explanation (9). In this section of my chapter, I will attempt to show these conflicting meanings of the word enthusiasm and how they appear in Shelley's writings.

In Valperga, Shelley shows how there is a connection between religious and poetic enthusiasm. Speaking about Beatrice, the narrator says:

> Every eye was fixed on her,—every countenance changed as hers changed; they wept, they smiled, and at last became transported by her promises of the good that was suddenly to arise, and of the joy that would then await the constant of heart;—when, as this enthusiasm was at its height, some Dominican inquisitors came forward, surrounded her, and declared her their prisoner. (Valperga 213)

Thus, we see how the people are moved by enthusiasm, which is communicated to them by the inspired prophetess. The fact that the audience became "transported" by what she prophesies conveys the enthusiasm that they felt. Timothy Clark explains that enthusiasm can also be seen as "a notion of passion and of its communicability" (The Theory of Inspiration 65). Indeed, Beatrice in this scene resembles Corinne who communicates her enthusiasm to her audience. For this reason, it is useful to refer to Duff's explanation, in his Essay on Original Genius, of the manner by which enthusiasm excites "in every susceptible breast the same emotions that were felt by the Author himself" (171). In other words, the emotion poets feel in the moment of inspiration is transmitted through enthusiasm to their audiences. In relation to this quote, Clark explains that for Duff enthusiasm is: "an intensifier and disseminator" and works "as a

principle of communicability." (The Theory of Inspiration 71). The comparison of Beatrice's communication of enthusiasm with Corinne's shows how Shelley's interest in religious enthusiasm extends to poetic inspiration. This intersection between religious and poetic enthusiasm is also apparent in the Defence of Poetry where PBS discusses the link between poetry and prophecy:

> Poets, according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called, in earlier epochs of the world, legislators, or prophets…Not that I asserts poets to be prophets in the gross sense of the word, or that they can foretell the form as surely as they foreknow the spirit of events: such is the pretence of superstition, which would make poetry an attribute of prophecy, rather than prophecy an attribute of poetry. (Olson 7)

Indeed, throughout his Defence of Poetry, PBS borrows the language of religious enthusiasm to support his argument. Similarly, Jasper Cragwall argues that PBS employs a rhetoric associated with crowd enthusiasm in his valorization of poetry. Cragwall writes:

> Poets are prophets, but not that kind of prophet; Shelley's argument trips over 'the gross sense' and the vulgar 'pretence' of the prophecies of Southcott and Brothers. 'Vulgarity' is a swamp into which Shelley finds his aesthetic foundations sinking, despite his best efforts to drain off the confusions…Shelley is unable to desynonymize his problems away—'distinction' itself is the 'vulgar error.' Shelley never entertains an oppositional (or even independent) vocabulary that could parse the inspirations of the poet from the inebriations of the crowd. The same discourse is reused, with the awkward dismissal of its 'gross sense'. ("The Shelleys' Enthusiasm" 639)

Just like PBS, Shelley is using this overlap between the discourses of poetic and religious enthusiasm in her narrative. This overlap is also apparent in Henry More's discussion of how enthusiasts and poets share "a due dash of Sanguine in the Melancholy" complexion. More writes:

> From this Complexion are Poets, and the more highly-pretending Enthusiasts: Betwixt whom this is the great difference, That a Poet is an Enthusiast in jest, and an Enthusiast is a Poet in good earnest; Melancholy prevailing so much with him, that he takes his no better then Poeticall fits and figments for divine Inspiration and reall Truth. (14).

This misinterpretation of her poetical inclination for being divine revelation is what occurs to Beatrice who is a character with a vibrant imagination and an ability to sing "extempore hymns" (Valperga 212). Thus, her religious enthusiasm is a reflection of her poetical temperament.

Shelley ultimately deflates supernatural enthusiasm in the narrative in order to emphasize reason. The narrator says that "The inquisitors accused her (Beatrice) of being an impostor, a misleader of the people, a dangerous and wicked enthusiast, whom the penitence and solitude of a cloister must cure of her extravagant dreams" (Valperga 214). On the one hand, Shelley criticizes the intolerance of the Inquisition towards heretical movements; on the other, covertly, she disapproves of claims of possessing prophetic abilities by such individuals as Johanna Southcott. Even though Shelley at first constructs Beatrice as a woman who possesses supernatural power, she quickly undoes this image by dissolving Beatrice's illusions about herself as a prophetess. Madonna Marchesana plays a major role in introducing Beatrice as someone having a divine power that permits her to mediate between the will of God and

that of humanity. She says that she has "been brought to a true knowledge of the will of God by this divine girl, this *Ancilla Dei*, as she is truly called, who is sent upon earth for the instruction and example of suffering humanity" (Valperga 201). Beatrice herself incarnates her role as a prophetess by exclaiming "I feel the spirit coming fast upon me" (Valperga 202); then, she names the day that Castruccio shall endeavor to restore the "rightful prince" and claims that she will prophesy to her people their freedom (Valperga 202). This is an indication that she internalizes the belief conveyed to her by Madonna Marchesana that she is a prophetess. However, the bishop demystifies Beatrice by unveiling the secrecy that surrounds her to Castruccio. The bishop relates the story of Wilhelmina of Bohemia, Beatrice's mother, who was the originator of a sect that held her to be the "Holy Ghost incarnate upon earth for the salvation of the female sex" (Valperga 204). In fact, Magfreda believed that Wilhemina's child was of immaculate conception. Rajan argues, "Beatrice 'parents' persuade us not because of their supernatural claims, but because heresy was a form of social critique…These first-generation of women use heresy to prefigure a feminism unauthorized in the middle ages and to imagine selves they could not know" ("Introduction" 23). Even though there is, as Rajan points out, a proto-feminism in the heretical beliefs of Beatrice's parents, Shelley ultimately undermines this supernatural female power by drawing attention to a Wollstonecraftian feminism that is based on reason rather than on the supernatural. Moreover, Shelley breaks the illusion of divine inspiration to reveal that Beatrice belongs only to common humanity, just like the witch possesses no real magical power but only deceives the Albinois. While on her pilgrimage after learning the hard truth, Beatrice suffers bodily pain and hunger, and so the illusion of herself as a prophetess with faculties above common humanity is broken:

> Alone, deserted by God and man, I had lost my firm support, my belief in my own powers; I had lost my friends; and I found, that the vain, self-sufficing, cloud-inhabiting Beatrice was in truth a poor dependent creature, whose heart sunk, when in the evening she came to a clear brook running through a little wood, and she found no cup to satisfy her appetite. (Valperga 356)

Shelley dismantles a belief in a supernatural world represented by Beatrice, the Albinois, and the witch who all end up dying around the same time in the narrative. Shelley, thus, values reason over a subjectivity that is driven by enthusiasm by showing the reader a world where supernatural enthusiasm does not work.

One of the sources from which Shelley draws the story of Beatrice's birth is from the example of Johanna Southcott who believed herself to be favoured with divine Revelation. By doing so, she engages with the history of heresy in England. Although the bishop holds that Beatrice was talented, he maintains that her religious enthusiasm was misguided. Despite the fact that the bishop taught her the "truth" of the Catholic religion in order to counteract the fact that Beatrice's thinking seemed to be heretical, he says that studying and being taught religion only led her to further indulge in "the wild dreams of her imagination" (Valperga 211). Indeed, the bishop recounts:

> Beatrice herself is wrapt up in the belief of her own exalted nature, and really thinks of herself the *Ancilla Dei*, the chosen vessel into which God has poured a portion of his spirit: she preaches, she prophecies, she sings extempore hymns, and entirely fulfills the part of *Donna Estatica*. (Valperga 212)

In fact, Shelley annotates the meaning of *Donna Estatica*:

> These inspired women first appeared in Italy after the twelfth century, and have continued even until our days. After giving an account of their pretensions, Muratori gravely observes, 'We may piously believe that some were distinguished by supernatural gifts, and admitted the secrets of heaven; but we may justly suspect that the source of many of their revelations, was their ardent imagination, filled with ideas of religion and piety.' (Valperga 212)

By quoting this passage from Muratori, Shelley suggests that it is also Beatrice's "ardent imagination" that causes her to believe that she is divinely inspired (Valperga 214). Because Shelley complements the bishop's perspective by giving us more information on the significance of *Donna Estatica*, her voice endorses the bishop's view of Beatrice. As stated in my chapter one, there were many discourses against religious enthusiasm that occurred starting from the seventeenth century. It is obvious that Shelley in her turn participates in these debates about being divinely inspired to speak the word of God by indirectly criticizing Joanna Southcott who claimed to be a prophetess in the early nineteenth century. Referring to Joseph Lew's "God's Sister: History and Ideology in *Valperga*", Rajan notes, "Wilhelmina has been compared to the millenarian Joanna Southcott (1749-1814), a domestic servant preacher, who in 1814 experienced a hysterical pregnancy" (Valperga note 16, 458). Indeed, Lew argues that in the creation of Beatrice and Wilhelmina, Shelley was inspired by the prophetic claims of Joanna Southcott (164). Lew maintains that Magfreda's conviction that Wilhelmina's daughter was divinely conceived recalls Southcott's "announcement of the coming birth of Shiloh" (170).[241] Similarly, Kari E. Lokke argues that both Corinne and Southcott were subjects from

[241] The heresy of Wilhelmina consisted in her belief that as the Angel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary the birth of Jesus for the salvation of humanity, the Angel Raphael appeared to her mother proclaiming that she will conceive a child, Wilhelmina, who will be the incarnation of the Holy Spirit for the deliverance of women

which Shelley conceived Wilhelmina and Beatrice ("The Sweet Reward of all our Toil" 67). She explains that during Shelley's childhood, Southcott was hugely popular in her declarations to be the "New Saviour" who will save humanity and elevate women ("The Sweet Reward of all our Toil" 67). As both Lew and Lokke point out, there are many indications that Shelley used the life of Southcott in the creation of the character of Beatrice and her mother. In order to clarify Shelley's position towards such figures as the prophetess Joanna Southcott, it is useful to understand the historical meaning of prophecy in England. The reason why claims to prophecy were received with disapproval by critics such as Hobbes, Locke, More and others is that religious enthusiasm was associated with the English Civil War. In Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation, Jon Mee writes:

> To believe oneself to have an immediate relationship with one's God, to believe oneself able to apprehend his will directly, or be his peculiar favourite was to be guilty of enthusiasm. Prophetic pretensions, therefore, were always associated with the word, especially where those pretensions, as they did during the Civil War, claimed to be the basis of interventions in the public and political worlds. The sectaries of the English Civil War remained for the succeeding two centuries the primary examples of enthusiasm in English history. (9)

(Valperga 204). Wilhelmina's story has many parallels with Southcott's pretentions of being divinely inspired. Indeed Anne Mellor explains that Southcott believed that she was divinely favoured because it had been revealed to her that she was going to give birth to the second Christ even though she was still a virgin ("Blake, the Apocalypse, and Romantic Women Writers" 148). Mellor indicates that in The third book of Wonders, announcing the Coming of Shiloh, which appeared in March 1814, Southcott went so far as to claim that if her prophecy that she will bear the second Christ does not come true "'then Jesus Christ was not the Son of God, born in the manner of spoken by the Virgin Mary; but if I have a Son, this year; then, in like manner our Saviour was born.'" ("Blake, the Apocalypse and Romantic Women Writers" 148).

Thus, enthusiasm was perceived as dangerous with the potential of stirring unrest in the people and causing the dissolution of government. In like manner, Clark argues, "There is a paradoxical relation between the individualism of claims to personal inspiration and the spectre of contagious irrational feeling" (The Theory of Inspiration 64). Shelley shows this paradox by depicting how Beatrice's assertions of being divinely inspired affects the crowd**.**

Indeed, one sense in which the word enthusiasm is used in both Valperga and in The Last Man, is the depiction of the phenomenon of crowd enthusiasm. Through the example of the storming of the Bastille in 1789 at the onset of the French Revolution, Shelley would have been familiar with crowd enthusiasm. In Valperga, when the inquisitors come to imprison Beatrice, the crowd reacts with supportive enthusiasm towards Beatrice:

> All became clamour and confusion; screams, vociferation, ejaculations, and curses burst from every tongue…the crowd, transported with rage seemed prepared to rescue the prisoner…The people armed themselves with stones, sticks, knives, and axes…and everything appeared to menace violence and bloodshed. (Valperga 213)

It is interesting to see how adept Shelley is in this passage about crowd psychology. By the fact that the people go mad in Beatrice's defense, the crowd can be described as being under some kind of "contagion of enthusiasm" (Social Psychology Alcock et al. 592). The narrator uses the word "transported" twice—once to convey the crowd's enthusiasm and then to convey how the enthusiasm changed to "rage" when they saw that their prophetess was in danger. Just as Matthew Lewis does in The Monk,[242] Shelley also draws from scenes of

[242] See p. 357 in Lewis's The Monk. Lewis writes,

> In the interim, the Populace besieged the Building with persevering rage: They battered the walls threw lighted torches in at the windows, and swore that by break of day not a Nun of St.

violence and crowd madness that happened during the French Revolution in order to depict crowd enthusiasm. What psychologists identify today as "contagions of enthusiasm" would already be identified in the seventeenth century by Lord Shaftesbury as "pannick" stirred in crowds. Lord Shaftesbury argues:

> We may with good reason call every Passion Pannick which is rais'd in a Multitude, and convey'd by Aspect, or as it were by Contact, or Sympathy. Thus popular Fury may be call'd *Pannick*, when the Rage of the People, as we have sometimes known, has put them beyond themselves; especially where Religion has had to do. And in this state their very Looks are infectious. The fury flies from Face to Face: and the Disease is no sooner seen than caught. (A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm 24)

Indeed, "rage" and "fury" is what Beatrice's supporters express when she is threatened by the Inquisition. When Beatrice interferes in this pandemonium to speak, the narrator explains that "the multitude hushed themselves to silence, and were as still, as when a busy swarm of bees, buzzing and flying about, all at once drop to silence, clinging round their queen, who is the mistress of their motions" (Valperga 213). By using a simile to compare the crowd to bees

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> Clare's order should be left alive. Lorenzo had just succeeded in piercing his way through the crowd, when one of the gates was forced open. The Rioters poured into the inferior part of the Building, where they exercised their vengeance upon everything which found itself in their passage. They broke the furniture into pieces, tore down the pictures, destroyed the reliques, and in their hatred of her Servant forgot all respect to the Saint. Some employed themselves in searching out the Nuns, Others in pulling down parts of the Convent, and others again in setting fire to the pictures and valuable furniture, which it contained. These Latter produced the most decisive desolation: Indeed the consequences of their action were more sudden, than themselves had expected or wished. The Flames rising from the burning piles caught part of the Building, which being old and dry, the conflagration spread with rapidity from room to room. The walls were soon shaken by the devouring element: The columns gave way: The Roofs came tumbling down upon the Rioters, and crushed many of them beneath their weight. Nothing was to be heard but shrieks and groans; The convent was wrapped in flames, and the whole presented a scene of devastation and horror. (The Monk 357-358).

Shelley records in her Journal that she reads Lewis's The Monk on September 22 1814 (The Journals of Mary Shelley Vol.1. 28).

around their queen, Shelley shows how the crowd has become like irrational creatures in awe towards their idol. Mee explains, "the fear of contagion remained central to the discourse of enthusiasm… Enthusiasm was regarded as violent and disruptive, it was the product of vulnerable minds, readily transmitted by the irrational mob" (30). In the same line of thinking, Clark writes, "Fear of enthusiasm is fear of mass cults, of crowd behaviour, of popular delusions or even insurrections. Elusive and unobjectifiable, enthusiasm may be as invisible and insidious as a rumour, and yet capable of galvanizing multitudes" (The Theory of Inspiration 63). The crowd's irrationality conveys the uneasiness that a critic, like Burke, felt in relation to enthusiasm and the French Revolution. Favouring tradition, Burke reacted against the enthusiasm that moved the masses and caused the storming of Bastille and the imprisonment of the Royal family.[243] Burke writes, "All circumstances taken together, the French Revolution is the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world…Everything seems out of nature in this strange chaos of levity and ferocity, and of all sorts of crimes jumbled together with all sorts of follies" (Reflections on the Revolution in France 428). For a philosopher such as Burke who emphasized tradition and a hierarchical system of society, it was shocking that the Jacobins would attempt to dismantle the whole constitution of France.[244]

Another way that Shelley engages with the historical impact of religious enthusiasm in England is by portraying Methodism negatively in The Last Man. Lionel recounts that from the English who left, from England to Paris, trying to escape the plague, there was a group formed by a "sectarian, self-erected prophet", whose aim was personal power (The Last Man 294). Lionel further describes the false prophet as an "impostor" who had from his youth

[243] See Peter J. Stanlis's explanations on p. 419 for more detail about Burke and the French Revolution.
[244] See Stanlis's notes on p. 424-425 about the role of the Jacobins and the French Revolution.

yielded excessively to his malicious inclinations; as a result, he acquired laxity in morals (The Last Man 294). Lionel attributes the false prophet's maliciousness to the teachings of his Methodist father who with his "pernicious doctrines of election and special grace had contributed to destroy all conscientious feeling in his son" (The Last Man 294). Jean de Palacio explains how Shelley underlined the dangers that can accompany Methodism:

> Nul doute que Mary n'ait voulu souligner de la sorte les perversions auxquelles pouvait donner lieux le méthodisme, par la doctrine qui voulait distinguer quelques élus de la masse de l'humanité, et la fermentation soigneusement entretenue dans l'âme des foules par les harangues enflammées et les prodiges fabriqués de toutes pièces. L'homme régressait ainsi vers un état où les superstitions les plus barbares affermissaient la tyrannie au profit du sacerdoce. Les conclusions de Mary Shelley rejoignent ainsi celles, également décisives, que Leigh Hunt avait formulées à l'endroit du méthodisme dans une série d'articles publiés dans l'*Examiner* de 1808. Chez l'un comme chez l'autre, en effet, les critiques contre cette église constituaient une affirmation de leur libéralisme étendu aux affaires religieuses. (Mary Shelley dans son œuvre 279-282)

Indeed, Shelley implies that the wickedness of the false prophet is an effect of the teachings of his Methodist father. The false prophet's manipulation of his disciples' vulnerability instills in them superstitious belief and causes them to fall prey to his tyranny. As de Palacio implies, both Shelley and Leigh Hunt dislike Methodism because demagogues discourage the use of reason by inculcating fanaticism in their followers. In An Attempt to Shew the Folly and

Danger of Methodism in a Series of Essays, Hunt, a close friend to the Shelleys, critiques the Methodists; he writes:

> As to reason, it is altogether useless and abominable: the world indeed have generally imagined, that it was a most excellent gift of God and assisted us considerably in discerning truth from falsehood, but the Methodists will have nothing to do with it; if you dispute the subject they tell you it is carnal reason, the blind guide, the old Adam; that faith has nothing to do with common sense; that you must not pretend to be wise before God; in short, that you must be excessively stupid and have a perfect comprehension of mysteries. Thus they utterly reject reason, and then proceed to give you the reason why. God has given us ears to hear and eyes to see; but these men stop their ears and pretend to judge of harmony, they shut their eyes and firmly believe that such a piece of cloth is of the colour of blue without seeing it. (52)

As is apparent by the manner that she depicts the effects that the false-prophet has on his converts, Shelley shared Hunt's disapproval of the manner that the Methodists were opposed to reason. Jon Mee writes, "Hunt regarded Methodism as a throwback to 'the fanatics of the commonwealth' (H p.ix)" (81). Indeed, Mee explains that in the nineteenth century, even though the term enthusiasm had lost some of its negative connotations, "it was never successfully rehabilitated. It remained haunted by the fear of the combustible matter within both the individual and the body politic" (5). Thus, mistrust created during the English Civil War for enthusiasm was carried in the nineteenth century, as the example of the false prophet in Shelley's narrative displays.

Shelley shows that claims to supernatural abilities often hide a desire for power that is effected by manipulating the people's enthusiasm. Lionel says that the plague offered an opportunity for religious leaders to acquire great power, which had the potential to turn evil if motivated by "fanaticism or intolerance" (The Last Man 294). He recounts that as the plague continued to claim lives, "many fanatics arose, who prophesied that the end of time was come" (The Last Man 206). In fact, Lionel acutely discerns that superstition is born out of fear: "The spirit of superstition had birth from the wreck of our hopes" (The Last Man 206). Indeed, Jean de Palacio comments: "Pour Shelley comme pour Mary, la grande imposture de la religion consistait à profiter des temps de crise pour fanatiser les foules et tenter d'endoctriner à son profit les esprits inquiets ou ébranlés" (Mary Shelley dans son oeuvre 279). The fact that Shelley dislikes, as de Palacio points out, the manipulation by religious authorities of the people's despair and fears is similar to David Hume's argument that ministers of religion gain power by spreading superstition, which is built on people's insecurities. In "Of Superstition and Enthusiasm", Hume writes, "My first reflection is, *That superstition is favourable to priestly power*…As superstition is founded on fear, sorrow, and a depression of spirits" (75). The people's superstition allows the priest to gain such power that, as Hume says, the priest "becomes the tyrant and disturber of human society" ("Of Superstition and Enthusiasm" 78). This is, in fact, what the impostor prophet becomes to his followers in The Last Man. Lionel recounts that the "impostor-prophet" hoped that if the human race survived the plague, he will gain the status of a deified figure (The Last Man 302). He taught his followers that their means of escape from the plague, the preservation of their children, and the future of their posterity relied on their acceptance and belief in his divinely directed authority (The Last Man 303). By the fact that his followers had become extremely faithful to him supports de Palacio's

argument that the false-prophet was profiting from the despair of the people to win dominion. This is the case with Juliet who having already suffered from temporary madness at the loss of her loved ones becomes extremely anxious that she would also lose her child. Thus, her vulnerability made her an "easy prey to the Methodist" (The Last Man 304). Another instance where Shelley points out how a desire for power can result in devastating consequences is with the witch Mandragola in Valperga. The narrator asks concerning the witch:

> What made these women pretend to powers they did not possess, incur the greatest evil for the sake of being believed to be what they are not, without any apparent advantage accruing to themselves from this belief? I believe we may find the answers in our own hearts: the love of power is inherent to human nature; and, in evil natures, to be feared is a kind of power. (Valperga 325)

Both the false-prophet in The Last Man and the witch in Valperga do not actually experience enthusiasm themselves but through their cunning pretentions to possessing supernatural powers, they manipulate the enthusiasm in others in order to gain power. To the witch's advantage, Bindo makes a point to spread the news of her supposed magical powers far and wide; thus, the witch greatly profits from Bindo's naïveté. Crignon-de Oliveira points out that the pretention to prophetic abilities lays claim to authority on others (12). Thus, Crignon-de Oliveira explains that the problematic for critics of the seventeenth-century was to figure out whether the prophet in question was genuinely inspired or was merely under a delusion, or was simply an impostor (12). Drawing from the history of religious enthusiasm in England, Shelley makes it clear that both the false-prophet and the witch are impostors.

As opposed to superstition, Shelley shows that an enthusiasm characterized by disinterested benevolence can be beneficial to civil society, When in Paris, the remaining

humans on earth disunite themselves in different parties ready to attack each other. One of the leaders of the groups feels remorse for having sown dissension among the people and, thus, threatening an already declining number of humans to the disappearance of the human race from earth all together. He, thus, attempts to reconcile the different groups at strife with each other. He admits that "he had been hurried away by passion, but that a cooler moment had arrived" (The Last Man 295). Hume's explanation of this cooling down of the passion of enthusiasm is useful to understand the above passage. Hume writes, "It is thus enthusiasm produces the most cruel disorders in human society; but its fury is like that of thunder and tempest, which exhaust themselves in a little time, and leave the air more calm and serene than before." ("Of Superstition and Enthusiasm" 77). This description bestows more integrity and benevolence to whomever feels enthusiasm, as opposed to superstition. Indeed, Hume would say, "*that superstition is an enemy to civil liberty, and enthusiasm a friend to it*" ("Of Superstition and Enthusiasm" 78). This is relevant because the leader whose enthusiasm sobers down is also the man who attempts to convince the people to put themselves under the guidance of Adrian, the Lord Protector. Lionel relates that the chief leader, "spoke with warmth; he reminded them of the oath all the chiefs had taken to submit to the Lord Protector; he declared their present meeting to be an act of treason and mutiny" (The Last Man 295). The fact that he brings to mind their "oath" to the Lord Protector and describes their present quarrels as "treason and mutiny" brings to mind Burke's description of civil society in Reflections on the Revolution in France and Thomas Hobbes's Commonwealth in Leviathan. Indeed, Burke writes,

> One of the first motives to civil society, and which becomes one of its fundamental rules, *that no man should be judge in his own cause*. By this each

> person has at once divested himself of the first fundamental right of unconvenanted man, that is, to judge for himself, and to assert his own cause. He abdicates all right to be his own governor. He inclusively, in a great measure, abandons the right to self-defence, the first law of Nature. Men cannot enjoy the rights of an uncivil and of a civil state together. (Reflections on the Revolution in France 452).

Thus, Burke argues that in order to have "social freedom", men have to surrender their power to self-government in order to achieve civil society under "wise laws" and "well constructed institutions" ("A Letter to M. Depont" 420). Thus, it is under Adrian's benevolent leadership that the remaining humans can enjoy peace, order, and their social freedom. Similarly, Hobbes, in the seventeenth-century, emphasizes the necessity of choosing and, thereafter, accepting the authority of a ruler in order to maintain the common good:

> The only way to erect such Common Power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of Forraigners, and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort, as that by their owne industrie, and by the fruites of the Earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly; is, to conferre all their power and strength upon one Man, or upon one Assembly of men, that may reduce all their Wills, by plurality of voices, unto one Will…This done, the Multitude so united in one Person, is called a COMMON-WEALTH, in latine CIVITAS. This is the Generation of the great LEVIATHAN, or rather (to speake more reverently) of that *Mortall God*, to which wee owe under the *Immortal God*, our peace and defence. For by this Authoritie, given him by every particular man in the Common-Wealth, he hath the use of so much Power

> and Strength conferred on him, that by terror thereof, he is inabled to con forme the wills of them all, to Peace at home, and mutual ayd against their enemies abroad. And in him consisteth the Essence of the Commonwealth; which to define it,) is *One person, of whose Acts a great Multitude, by mutuall Covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the Author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all, as he shall think expedient, for their peace and Common Defence*. (Leviathan 120-121)

Shelley implies that a commonwealth may offer security and peace, and she makes it clear that she values Adrian's disinterested guidance over the methods of the false-prophet who uses fear and falsehood to win his supporters. When Adrian arrives at Paris to settle peace among the people, Lionel says:

> I had seen Lord Raymond ride through his lines; his look of victory, and majestic mien obtained the respect and obedience of all: such was not the appearance or influence of Adrian. His slight figure, his fervent look, his gesture, more of deprecation than rule, were proofs that love, unmingled with fear, gave him dominion over the hearts of a multitude, who knew that he never flinched from danger, nor was actuated by other motives than care for the general welfare. (The Last Man 297-298)

It is Adrian's enthusiasm that allows him to have the necessary strength to guide the people, despite the ravages that the plague causes. Thus, it seems paradoxical that, on the one hand, Shelley has Adrian rule by enthusiasm, and, on the other, that she would underline such conservative views as expressed by Hobbes and Burke who disengaged their theories from

discourses on enthusiasm. Thus, it is not that Shelley rejects enthusiasm but rather that she sees the necessity to regulate it under civil society.

Shelley depicts in The Last Man, how crowd enthusiasm can pose a threat to civil society. The leader of the sect refused to allow Adrian to act as a mediator to resolve the strife between the groups. Such sectarian resistance to a peaceful intermediary also reflects the conflicts that occurred during the English Civil War. Indeed, Hobbes argues that division among the people led to the dissolution of the kingdom and to the English Civil War:

> And this division is it, whereof it is said, *a Kingdome divided in it selfe cannot stand*: For unlesse this division precede, division into opposite Armies can never happen. If there had not first been an opinion received of the greatest part of *England*, that these Powers were divided between the King, and the Lords, and the House of Commons, the people had never been divided, and fallen into this Civill Warre; first between those that disagreed in Politiques; and after between the Dissenters about the liberty of Religion. (Leviathan 127)

Thus, the English Civil War led to a negative perception of enthusiasm as being dangerous. This mistrust for enthusiasm is reflected in The Last Man by the manner that Shelley depicts how the false-prophet's influence on his followers has threatening consequences on the security of the remaining humans on earth. As in Valperga, there is also the presence of crowd enthusiasm in The Last Man. In fact, the groups are so animated with strife that Lionel describes the people as having become an "insane mob" (297):

> The serene morning had dawned when we arrived at Saint Denis, and the sun was high, when the clamour of voices, and the clash, as we feared, guided us to where our countrymen had assembled on the place Vendome. We passed a knot

> of Frenchmen, who were talking earnestly of the madness of the insular invaders, and then coming by a sudden turn upon the Place, we saw the sun glitter on drawn swords and fixed bayonets, while yells and clamours rent the air. It was a scene of unaccustomed confusion in these days of depopulation. (The Last Man 297).

The choice of nouns such as "clamour", "clash", "madness", and "confusion" that Shelley uses in this scene conveys the loss of control, violence, and chaos that is typical in episodes of crowd enthusiasm. Clark explains how enthusiasm was seen as threatening: "Enthusiasm, then, is not primarily an issue because one or two people claim to prophesy or to speak for God, it is because it relates to the power of mass psychological movements, to sectarianism, to fear of the 'mob'" (The Theory of Inspiration 64). These apprehensions are brought in the forefront by the manner that Shelley depicts how crowd enthusiasm can cause the dissolution of civil society. In order to understand the relevancy of crowd enthusiasm in Shelley's novels, it is useful to point out the historical background of the concept that led to a mistrust of enthusiasm. In her introduction to Lord's Shaftesbury's A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm, Claire Crignon-Oliveira explains that the political and religious context of the seventeenth-century England shows that the English have good reason to show themselves suspicious towards those who pretend to have prophetic abilities or to perform miracles (16-17). Crignon Oliveira writes, "The troubles that shook the monarchy during the Civil War (1642-1660), and in particular the execution of Charles the First, explains, for the most, the virulence of the critique against enthusiasm" (16-17).[245] Indeed, Crignon-Oliveira believes that "The history of England in the seventeenth-century is inseparable from the history of religious movements"

[245] My translation

(16-17).[246] The fact that religious enthusiasm was perceived as threatening the English constitution is reflected in The Last Man by the depiction of the power-driven prophet who wrecks havoc among the last individuals of the human race with his falsehoods of possessing divine authority.

In addition to representing Methodism as being power-driven, Shelley tackles with another meaning of the word enthusiasm, which is associated with mental disorder. In an earlier instance in The Last Man, there is another false prophet who appears and whose prophetic "ravings" and dramatic behavior greatly affects the crowds. Upon realizing that his prophecies of the end of the world cause a man to become greatly affrighted, the false prophet reacts in a power-driven manner: "The maniac caught his glance, and turned his eye on him—one has heard of the gaze of the rattle-snake, which allures the trembling victim till he falls within his jaws. The maniac became composed; his person rose higher; authority from his countenance." (The Last Man 207). As De Palacio implies, this sketch of the false-prophet offers strong indications that he is a Methodist because members of this sect were often described as being power-hungry and as being under the illusion of being divinely-inspired. De Palacio explains how the characteristics of this false-prophet correspond to the usual portrayal of the Methodist:

> Dans *The Last Man*, l'exalté qui vient haranguer les habitants de Windsor peut fournir une première image des ravages ainsi exercés. Il s'agit d'un ouvrier dont la peste a decimé la famille et supprimé le gagne-pain…Gestes désordonnés, phrases oraculaires, visions et commerce avec les esprits, on retrouve dans ce tableau les traits habituels du prédicateur méthodiste dont se

[246] My translation

> moquaient les romanciers. On met bientôt un terme aux vaticinations de l'infortuné, dont les agissements sont ici dépourvus de conséquence. (Mary Shelley dans son œuvre 279-282)

As De Palacio points out, however, this prophet has also become mentally ill because of the loss of his family and his means of subsistence due to the plague; as a result, he falsely imagines himself as having prophetic capabilities. Lionel says: "wild with hunger, watching and grief, his diseased fancy made him believe himself sent by heaven to preach the end of time to the world. He entered the churches, and foretold to the congregations their speedy removal to the vaults below" (The Last Man 206). Although Shelley shows that the prophet is being power-driven, she also shows that his illusion of having prophetic abilities arose due to excessive grief and bodily hunger, which led to a form of mental insanity. Thus, the idea that the false-prophet suffers from a type of mental disorder calls attention to another meaning of the word enthusiasm that is present in Shelley's narrative. In the seventeenth century, the enthusiasm associated with the belief of being divinely inspired began to be associated with medical discourses about insanity. Crignon-de-Oliveira points out that medical discourses adopted rational explanations to explain instances of trance, ecstasy, or inspiration by claiming that these were cases not of supernatural phenomena but of a pathological disorder ("Introduction" 12). Crignon-de Oliveira writes that "far from possessing supernatural gifts, enthusiasts are simply seen as being ill, victims of a pathological disorder that disturbs their imagination to the point that they persuade themselves that they are in communication with the divine, that they are inspired" ("Introduction" 12).[247] Mee further clarifies that instead of being

[247] My translation

seen as heresy, enthusiasm was now interpreted as occurring from an imbalance in the bodily humours that affected the brain:

> A language of pathology soon developed to explain enthusiasm's explosive presence in the body politic. Anglican writers developed the idea of enthusiasm as the product of vapours clouding the brain. Two texts published in 1656, Meric Casaubon's Treatise Concerning Enthusiasm and Henry More's Enthusiasmus Triumphatus, began the process of understanding enthusiasm as a product of diseased minds. Enthusiasm was increasingly seen as a pathology of the individual and society, rather than heresy: a 'Distemper' which 'disposes a man to listen to the Magisterial Dictates of an over-bearing *Phansy*, more then the calm and cautious insinuation of free *Reason*'. Psychological explanations of this distemper were increasingly supplemented by physiological accounts. Overheated by the 'Phansy' the animal spirits responsible for transmitting impressions to the mind were believed to give off vapours, which clouded their passage and allowed the vagaries of the imagination to be mistaken for external reality. (28-29)

As Mee indicates, enthusiasm was now considered to be the outcome of a "diseased mind". It is to these pathological views of enthusiasm in the seventeenth century that Shelley refers to when she writes about the false-prophet's delusions: "his diseased fancy made him believe himself sent by heaven to preach the end of time to the world" (The Last Man 206).

Both Henry More' and John Locke's physiological explanations of enthusiasm are useful to understand one of the ways that enthusiasm is used in Shelley's writings. In his introduction to Henry More's Enthusiasmus Triumphatus, M.V. DePorte explains that

enthusiasts were generally considered by critics of the seventeenth-century as deceivers and as cooperators with the Devil (iii). However, More did not wish through his writings to arouse hostility or persecution towards enthusiasts (DePorte iii). He simply wanted to prevent enthusiasts from acquiring new disciples; thus, he chose to portray them as suffering from a mental illness (DePorte iii). In other words, More attributed their illusions of divine inspiration to melancholy (DePorte iii). More writes:

> The Spirit then that wings the Enthusiast in such a wonderful manner, is nothing else but that flatulency which is the Melancholy complexion, and rises out of the Hypochondriacal humour upon some occasional heat, as Winde out of an Aeolipila applied to the fire. Which fume mounting into the Head, being first actuated and spirited and somewhat refined by the warmth of the Heart, fills the Mind with variety of Imaginations, and so quickens and inlarges Invention, that it makes the Enthusiast to admiration fluent and eloquent, he being as it were drunk with new wine drawn from the Cellar of his own that lies in the lowest region of his Body, though he be not aware of it, but takes it to be pure Nectar, and those waters of life that spring from above. (12)

According to More's physiological explanation, the effects of the melancholia complexion are similar to being in a state of intoxication. More maintains that because the influence of melancholia arises "unexpectedly and suddenly to surprise the Mind with such vehement fits of Zeal, such streams and torrents of Eloquence",…the enthusiast "does not doubt that any thing less was the cause of this unexpected joy and triumph then the immediate arme of God from heaven that has thus exalted him; when it is nothing indeed but a Paroxysme of Melancholy" (13). More's medical elucidation proposes, therefore, that the unpredictable

nature of melancholia's action causes enthusiasts to misinterpret their sensations for divine revelation. Similarly, in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Locke would oppose enthusiasm to reason and would deny all supernatural explanations by reducing enthusiasm to physiological causes (699). Locke writes:

> Hence we see, that in all Ages, Men, in whom Melancholy has mixed with Devotion, or whose conceit of themselves has raised them into an Opinion of a greater familiarity with God, and a nearer admittance to his favour than is afforded to others, have often flatter'd themselves with a perswasion of an immediate intercourse with the Deity, and frequent communications from the divine Spirit. (699)

According to these interpretations, enthusiasm is a state of delirium that is produced by melancholia, a bodily disorder.

In The Last Man, Shelley depicts religious enthusiasm that has its roots in melancholia in the character of Juliet. Seeking to preserve her child from the plague and having already suffered from mental illness after the death of her loved ones, Juliet becomes particularly vulnerable to the false-prophet's teachings and falls again in a state of enthusiasm that has its roots in melancholia. Furthermore, Lionel observes that while Juliet listens to false-prophet's sermon, she has "the glare of madness" (The Last Man 304). Lionel says:

> She became an easy prey to the Methodist; her sensibility and acute fears rendered her accessible to every impulse; her love for her child made her eager to cling to the merest straw held out to save him. Her mind, once unstrung, and now tuned by roughest inharmonious hands, made her credulous: beautiful as fabled goddess, with voice unrivalled sweetness, burning with new lighted

> enthusiasm, she became a stedfast proselyte, and powerful auxiliary to the leader of the elect. (The Last Man 304)

This "new lighted enthusiasm" is like a form of intoxication that arises from an imbalance in the melancholia humour. While Lionel attempts to convince Juliet to escape with him away from the impostor-prophet, he recounts how "she relapsed into the delirium of fanaticism" (The Last Man 304). She warns him she shall give him away in order to save her child: "strange sounds and inspirations come on me at times, and if the Eternal should in awful whisper reveal to me his will that to save my child you must be sacrificed, I would call in the satellites of him you call the tyrant" (The Last Man 304-305). Drawing from More's and Locke's theories of enthusiasm, her divine revelations are delusions of an enthusiasm that stems from melancholia. De Palacio writes, "L'emprise progressive de la superstition sur un esprit malade, au bord du désespoir et de la folie, est analysée pas à pas dans l'attitude, le discours, le regard même de Juliette en proie à cette exaltation de la fausse mystique que favorisent à dessein les vaticinations du prophète" (Mary Shelley dans son œuvre 279-282). As De Palacio argues, Shelley closely analyzes how superstition is developed in a mind that is already prone to mental illness. In Natural History of Enthusiasm, Isaac Taylor would also write in 1829 that "Religious madness, when it occurs, is most often the madness of despondency" (96). This shows how associations of enthusiasm with melancholia would still be made by Shelley's contemporaries. In sum, Shelley draws from medical discourses of enthusiasm to draw a link between madness and enthusiasm.

Another type of enthusiasm that Shelley explores is melancholic love that leads to madness. It is plausible that the intoxicating potion that leads Beatrice to insanity and precipitates her death is made from mandrake—a plant that More believes to induce madness.

When Beatrice drinks the "intoxicating draught" that the witch gives her and, as a result, becomes responsive to the witch's suggestion that she possesses supernatural power, she becomes totally engrossed in the incantation that supposedly would conjure Castruccio to her (Valperga 388). Partly because of the effect that the drug has on her, she enters her role completely; and not able to contain herself, she dies as a result of this experience. Shelley chooses the name Mandragola for the witch. This name, Mandragola, sounds like mandragora, which, according to the OED, is the literary name for mandrake. The OED explains that it is a plant that "was formerly used in herbal medicine and magic". Indeed, More would parallel the physiological effects of melancholy to ingesting an "intoxicating Potion" that contained the herbs of mandrake and was known to cause delusion and madness in a subject (7). Shelley chose the name Mandragola for the witch to refer to the drug made from mandrake that induces madness. Mandrake mimics the intoxicating effects that are naturally caused by the melancholia humour. Thus, the name Mandragola not only suggests the intoxicating potion that Beatrice drinks but also the melancholia that afflicts her and leads her to enthusiasm.

Furthermore, it is obvious that Shelley dislikes Roman Catholicism, as it is demonstrated in many of her writings. Michael Heyd argues that Catholicism was open to the accusation of enthusiasm, especially during Restoration England (8). Shelley's dislike of Catholicism, however, is dissociated from enthusiasm through an emphasis on superstitious belief. For instance, in "The Bride of Modern Italy", she views the Catholic religion to be false: "the nature of the Catholic religion, which crushes the innate conscience by giving a false one in its room" ("The Bride of Modern Italy" 34). Similarly, in Falkner, Shelley refers to Catholicism as "a form of worship", which is "evil in its effects on the human mind" (Falkner 140). She thus suggests that Catholicism breeds superstition in people. Michael

Schiefelbein explains how Shelley associates Catholicism with backward views: "It was by nourishing ignorance, superstition, and dependency on the clergy that the Catholic hierarchy dehumanized the faithful, both robbing them of their freedom to reason and instilling in them vices associated with unenlightened thinking" (59). She disapproves of what she perceives to be the unprogressive methods of the Catholic authorities, identifying herself more closely with what was considered as the more liberal Protestant view. Schiefelbein writes, "Admittedly, she and her enlightened circle had little use for Christianity in general, but at least Protestantism was born of a fight for liberty while Catholicism was the very source of subjugation requiring the rebellion" (59). For Shelley, people's minds became enslaved under the superstitious belief that Catholicism engendered. She is, thus, in agreement with Hume who claimed that superstition "renders men tame and abject, and fits them for slavery." ("Of Superstition and Enthusiasm" 78). Schiefelbein argues that her disdain for Catholicism leads her to portray in Valperga, "superstitions peasants" and corrupt and cruel priests"; however, he also maintains that a closer analysis of the work uncovers a very compelling attraction towards Catholicism that would mislead anyone unacquainted with Shelley's real sentiments towards this religion (60). Indeed, Shelley is very sensitive and adept at discerning the enthusiasm associated with religious devotion and mystical states of the Catholic religion.

Despite her dislike of Catholicism, Shelley adopts material from the Catholic Christian tradition in order to depict devotional enthusiasm in Valperga. Euthanasia reaches a state of enthusiasm associated with saintliness, in which she attempts to repair the destructiveness of Castruccio's despotism. After Castruccio conquers Florence, devastation, great poverty, and sickness issue. The narrator says, "An heroic sentiment possessed her mind, and lifted her above humanity; she must atone for the crimes of him she had loved" (Valperga 400). She

tries to redeem Castruccio from his crimes by doing what she calls her "duty" through her loving acts, generosity, and self-sacrifice (Valperga 400). She acts upon an ideal that she should mend the injurious deeds of her past lover. When Euthanasia cares for the wounded and sick during Casrruccio's dominion over Florence, the narrator indicates:

> Her sleep when she found time to sleep, was deep and refreshing; as she moved, she felt as if she were air, there was so much elasticity and lightness of spirit in her motions and her thoughts. She shed tears, as she heard the groans and complaints of the sufferers; but she felt as if she were lifted beyond their sphere, and that her soul, clothed in garments of heavenly texture, could not be tarnished with earthly dross. (Valperga 402)

It is as if Euthanasia has almost reached a state of saintliness through her benevolent actions. She is untouched by infection despite caring for people with contagious diseases. In this, she resembles Adrian, in The Last Man, who being moved by the enthusiasm of caring for the well-being of others during the plague is not only immune from infection but also regains his energy and health. Similarly, Schiefelbein writes, "Indeed her role as 'ministering angel' (3: 37) to her subjects, to Beatrice, and Castruccio himself, Euthanasia is identified with the most revered saint of the Roman Church: the virgin Mary" (63). Indeed, she does resemble the Virgin Mary who prays for the salvation of humankind. For instance, when she refuses to be sent to exile, Castruccio kneels down and prays her: "I intreat; by the prayers which you offer up for my salvation, I conjure as they shall be heard, so also hear me!" (Valperga 432). Thus, there is saintliness present in Euthanasia's attempt to mend for the destructive deeds of her past lover and in her caring actions towards others.

Another instance where Shelley draws from Catholic beliefs of devotional enthusiasm is in her description of Perdita's idolization of her husband in The Last Man. Described by Lionel as a "recluse" and as having "visionary moods", Perdita has this enthusiasm that resembles the passion that saints undergo for the sufferings of Christ (The Last Man 13). She is devoted to her husband with a passionate enthusiasm that is self-sacrificing. When she learns that Raymond had been imprisoned by the ottomans in his participation in the liberation of Greece, she "abstained from food; she lay on the bare earth, and, by such mimickry of his enforced torments, endeavoured to hold communion with his distant pain" (The Last Man 132). By fasting and imitating his agony, Perdita does what some devout Christians do to empathetically imitate the passion of Christ. In fact, it is known that physical renunciations such as fasting can induce an ecstatic state,[248] in which the mystic has achieved spiritual union with the Divine. Similarly, Perdita renounces her physical needs in order achieve, in a mystical manner, spiritual union with her husband's pain. In brief, in her worship of Raymond, Perdita enacts an enthusiasm that is manifested in her devotional contemplation for his being.

Enthusiasm Tempered by Reason

By removing the veil of the divine by which Beatrice clothes her amorous enthusiasm for Castruccio, Shelley advocates for a rational view of love for women. Beatrice links the emotions she feels for Castruccio with "divine inspiration": "She felt her soul, as it were, fade away, and incorporate itself with another and diviner spirit, which whispered truth and knowledge to her mind, and then slowly receding, left her human nature, agitated, joyful, and exhausted" (Valperga 227). Shelley draws from discourses of the manner that the body reacts with excitement under the effect of divine inspiration**.** Lord Shaftesbury explains this effect,

[248] See The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church for a definition of "ecstasy" p.167.

> They were persons said to have seen some Species of Divinity, as either some Rural Deity, or Nymph, which threw them into such Transports as over came their Reason. The Extasys express'd themselves outwardly in Quakings, Tremblings, Toffings of the Head and Limbs, *Agitations*, and (as *Livy* calls them) *Fanatical Throws* or Convulsions, extemporary Prayer, Prophecy, Singing, and the like. (A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm 77)

As Shaftesbury explains, there were bodily symptoms reported to be present when an individual was in a state of enthusiasm. Shaftesbury also notes that under the effect of enthusiasm "extemporary prayer, Prophecy and Singing" could occur. This is relevant in connection to Beatrice who "sings extempore hymns" (Valperga 212). In fact, Beatrice is the character that most resembles Corinne with her talent for improvisation. This is further evidence that the state of divine inspiration of the mythical poet and of the religious prophet are on a continuum. Furthermore, the narrator unveils Beatrice's illusions by commenting that it is Beatrice's "ardent imagination" that created an emotional enthusiasm for Castruccio and that "she followed that as a guide, which she ought to have bound with fetters, and to have curbed and crushed by every effort of reason" (Valperga 230). In this restraining of women's sexuality, Shelley resembles her mother, Wollstonecraft, who in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman insists on a rational friendship between romantic partners and is against the idea of women surrendering to romantic passion.[249] Just as Corinne's heartbrokenness leads to a loss of her genius, Beatrice falls when her self-identity as a prophetess is destroyed and when her romantic fantasies of the divine nature of her love for Castruccio are shattered. The narrator

[249] Wollstonecraft writes, "Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational friendship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers—in a word, better citizens. We should then love them with true affection, because we should learn to respect ourselves" (A Vindication of the Rights of Woman 150).

says, "and she resigned herself entire to her visionary joys, until she finally awoke to truth, fallen, and for ever lost" (Valperga 231). When Castruccio is finally frank with Beatrice about being obliged to leave her, she then perceives life as being "naked and appalling" (Valperga 232). After Beatrice is drugged by the witch, she waits expectantly for Castruccio to appear, and when she hears the sound of the approaching horses, she can no longer contain herself and completely loses control. This extreme enthusiasm leads her to madness and death. Shelley criticizes this kind of female devotion towards a male lover through the voice of the narrator who refers to Beatrice as "the most utterly undone of women" because of her behavior (Valperga 389). Unlike Euthanasia, Beatrice's "ardent imagination" is not "tempered" with reason, which leads her to her downfall instead of having a positive effect on her (Valperga 230 & 133). Thus, Shelley writes a cautionary tale for women that emphasizes reason over enthusiastic transports.

Another character who has a strong inclination for enthusiasm in Valperga is Euthanasia. Unlike Beatrice, however, Euthanasia's enthusiasm is tempered by reason. The idea that Euthanasia's enthusiasm is governed by reason is seen by her decision not to marry Castruccio when his political actions are in disaccord with her benevolent views. Similarly, Leanne Maunu explains "Although Castruccio desires to wed Euthanasia even though her political views do not coincide with his, Euthanasia remains firm in her decision not to attach herself to someone whose belief and practices are anathema to her own" (454). Euthanasia's resolution not to wed Castruccio is based on reason and can be allied to Godwin's insistence on "Sound reasoning and truth" in Political Justice (55). In Godwin's system of thought the greater good is more important than personal emotion (70-71). This argument is in accord with Euthanasia's reasoning; she is moved by the greater good in her decision not to marry

Castruccio. Her bent towards reason over emotion allows her to have a better coping mechanism than Beatrice after her separation from Castruccio. Personal emotion, Godwin says, is no part of "justice" or "virtue" (71). Godwin's removal of emotion from his view of justice is in accordance with Euthanasia who chooses not to ally herself to Castruccio when he chooses conquest over peace. She stands by her standards when he acts contrarily to her principles. Thus, her inflexible principles or decision allies her to Godwin and his theory of the general good. Godwin claims that an action is not a just endeavor if it benefits only one individual of one's preference to the detriment of the whole (74). In agreement with this line of thinking, Euthanasia renounces her marriage with Castruccio because by uniting herself to him, she may be contributing to her happiness and his, but she will be harming her fellow Florentines. Euthanasia's father taught her to choose between reason and emotion: She says, "at first I believed, that my heart was good, and that by following its dictates I should not do wrong…but he (her father) told me, that either my judgment or passions must rule me, and that my future happiness and usefulness depended on the choice I made between these two laws" (Valperga 147). She makes a choice between reason and emotion when she chooses not to marry Castruccio even if her heart was drawn to him, which again stresses Godwin's emphasis on reason. Even though Euthanasia deeply loves Castruccio, she stands by her values by refusing to marry him when he chooses war over peace. She says, "Love you indeed I always must; but I know, for I have studied my own heart, that it would not unite itself to yours, if, instead of these thoughts of peace and concord, you were to scheme war and conquest" (Valperga 166). Thus, her love is contingent on reasoning; this is opposite to Beatrice whose love for Castruccio is unconditional and is overwhelmingly based on emotion.

Shelley allows her characters' subjectivity to be impregnated by enthusiasm but only within the limits reason. In this, she is in accord with her parents opinions who may have presented radical philosophical views in their era but who both were at the same time emphasizing reason. For instance, Godwin argues, "Revolutions are the produce of passion, not of sober and tranquil reason" (128). This is what Shelley also emphasizes in her Journals where she states that she does not "wish to ally herself to the radicals—they are full of repulsion to me. Violent without any sense of justice—selfish in the extreme—talking without knowledge—rude, envious & insolent—I wish to have nothing to do with them" (Journals 555). It is probable that her antipathy for the radicals is due to the fact that they represent a too radical break with tradition and history. Referring to Burke's The Writings and Speeches, Jon Mee explains that for Burke tradition stands for:

> a force external to the individual which can further regulate his or her speculations: 'Always acting as if in the presence of canonized forefathers, the spirit of freedom, leading in itself to misrule and excess, is tempered with an awful gravity'…without tradition one is open to the delirium of individual consciousness. Tradition is a second nature that ought to be internalized as a safeguard against the enthusiasms of the moment. (88)

Thus, Shelley's line of thinking is in line with Burke's insistence on tradition by her emphasis on a tempered enthusiasm and by her rejection of extremist views. Moreover, Euthanasia is described as "walking among them, passionless yet full of enthusiasm" (Valperga 134). Shelley clearly makes a distinction between passion and enthusiasm by suggesting that Euthanasia's enthusiasm is not linked to passion or to earthly desire the way it is for Beatrice rather it is driven by an ideal of liberty.

Euthanasia's liberal actions are directed by an enthusiasm that is based on a Godwinian system of philosophy. For Godwin, an individual in possession of great wealth has to decide for the sake of justice by what means it can be used "for the increase of liberty, knowledge and virtue" of the whole (74). He insists that justice requires that an individual practices his "talents", "understanding", "strength" and "time, for the production of the greatest quantity of general good". (75). In a similar manner, Euthanasia who possesses a large estate, which is her castle, tries to benefit the people who are under her rule by using her resources for the benefit of all. In holding her court, Euthanasia also benefits her people through her generosity and hospitality by inviting and entertaining all. She relates that when she became the inheritor of Valperga, she considered turning her states into a republic, but because the political situation was too unstable, she feared that her people would suffer the consequences of "war", "party agitations", and "heavy taxes", and as a consequence, she decided to retain her rule (Valperga 169). Godwin's stress on reason leads him to conclude that there could be an "euthanasia of government" at a more evolved stage of society where "private judgment and individual conscience of mankind" would reign (125). In relation to Godwin's statement, Rajan points out that Euthanasia's name represents this death of government that is replaced by "self-government" ("Introduction"17). This euthanasia of government suggests Euthanasia's enthusiasm for liberty. Indeed Tim Fulford explains that Godwin's version of historical progress consists in the view that "As men became more rational and desires withered, government would also die away because men would act for what they reasoned to be right—the greater good of all." (5). By choosing the name Euthanasia, Shelley thus shows the extent to which her character embraces ideals of liberty and is committed to the common good. Similarly, Kari E. Lokke argues, "In order to emphasize Euthanasia's detachment from the

imperial political ambitions that define Castruccio, Shelley defines her enthusiasm explicitly and repeatedly as 'love of liberty' (p.142), an enthusiasm for freedom" ("The Sweet Reward of our Toil" 73). This love of liberty is also apparent when Euthanasia demands to be able to reign over her own state without having to obey Castruccio's orders. In other words, Euthanasia embodies a Godwinian philosophy—her enthusiasm stems upon a system of justice in which there is liberty of decision for all.[250] Thus, Euthanasia's republican views stand in sharp contrast to Pepi's ideas on the subjugation of the lower classes to the aristocracy. Pepi says, "My friend, the world, trust me, will never go well, until the rich rule, and the vulgar sink to their right stations as slaves of the soil" (Valperga 113). In his belief that the wealthy should "bury Liberty", Pepi shows no sympathy for the rights of the common people (Valperga 114). Pepi's political views would have probably outraged proponents of the French Revolution. In contrast to Pepi, Euthanasia's sympathies for the people are in line with Thomas Paine's Rights of Man. Paine writes:

> Occupied with establishing a constitution founded on the Rights of Man and the Authority of the People, the only authority on which Government has a right to exist in any country, the National Assembly felt none of those mean passions which mark the character of impertinent governments, founding themselves on their own authority, or on the absurdity of hereditary succession. (Rights of Man 142)

[250] Godwin writes, "Others are as much entitled to deem themselves in the right as we are. The most sacred of all priviledges, is that, by which each man has a certain sphere, relative to the government of his own actions, and the exercise of his discretion, not liable to be trenched upon the intemperate zeal or dictatorial temper of his neighbour" (Political Justice 133). At the same time, however, Godwin does recognize, like Burke and Hobbes, the necessity to limit the freedom of the individual for the greater good. He writes, "That any man, or body of men, should impose their sense upon persons of a different opinion is, absolutely speaking, wrong, and in all cases deeply to be regretted: but this evil it is perhaps in some degree necessary to incur, for the sake of a preponderating good. All government includes in it this evil, as one of its fundamental characteristics" (Political Justice133).

Thus, a constitution, for Paine, should be based on the authority of the people, not on the privileges of the nobility. Claire Grogan explains, "In Rights of Man Paine attacks hereditary power to advocate a system of meritocracy. He ridicules hereditary titles and honours that mark men as unequal and many as undeserving." (13). Thus, Euthanasia in her enthusiasm for liberty embraces democratic values and represents the rights of the common people.

In addition to incorporating her father's ethical system of justice within Euthanasia's views, Shelley also uses her husband's poetical theory to convey how poetry nourishes a philosophy of liberty in Euthanasia and leads her to acts of goodness. The narrator says that she "incorporated the thoughts of the sublimest geniuses with her own, while the creative fire in her heart and brain formed new combinations to delight and occupy her" (Valperga 134). The "creative fire in her heart" recalls PBS's Defence of Poetry where he states:

> What were virtue, Love, Patriotism, Friendship—what were the scenery of this beautiful Universe which we inhabit; what were our consolations on this side of the grave, and what were our aspirations beyond it, if Poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar? (Olson 30)

Thus, Euthanasia nourishes her mind with the poetry of ancient Roman poets, and it is through their poetry that she is inspired to act in a good and disinterested manner towards others. Furthermore, the "new combinations" that are formed in her mind because of the "creative fire" that has been transmitted to her from the ancient Roman poets is again reminiscent of PBS who writes, "But Poetry acts in another and diviner manner. It awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought. Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects

be as if they were not familiar" (Defence of poetry; Olson 12). Thus, Euthanasia, through the enthusiasm that she feels for the poetry of the ancient Roman poets, has developed an inner resource that is her imagination that helps her cope after her separation from Castruccio and finds the strength that she needs to help others when he conducts war and spreads destruction. The "creative fire in her heart and brain" suggests that she embraces the ideals of liberty of the Roman poets within her own imagination. PBS says:

> A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination…Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight…Poetry strengthens that faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man, in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb. (Defence of Poetry; Olson 13)

Thus, according to Percy, poetry acts upon the imagination, and it is through the imagination that man is moved to greater morality. As held Adam Smith in The Theory of Moral Sentiments,[251] PBS believes that it is through the imagination that man is able to achieve greater empathy. Explaining PBS theory of inspiration, Clark writes, "In effect Shelley marries the commonplace notion of enthusiasm as the *ec-stasis* of the psyche in the act of creation with notions of enthusiasm from the tradition of moral sentiment" (The Theory of Inspiration 149). Thus, Clark links poetical enthusiasm with virtue in PBS's theory. This link is reflected in Euthanasia who is altruistic and thinks of the good of others because she has been versed in

[251] Smith writes, "As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in like situation…it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations" (11).

the philosophy of the ancient Roman poets. Thus, Shelley does uphold the imagination together with the Romantic poets of her time.[252]

However, the fact that Euthanasia receives mental sustenance from the "creative fire" that has been handed down to her from the Roman poets through the agency of her father is also relevant to Godwin's statements about the effect of intellectual stimulation upon the mind. Godwin says, "Now there is perhaps no occupation so much at our command, no pleasure of the means of which we are so little likely to be deprived, as that which is intellectual. Sublime and expansive ideas produce delicious emotions" (Political Justice 144). These "delicious emotions" are what Euthanasia feels when her mind creates "new combinations" to "delight" her. Godwin also says, "When the minds expands in works of taste and imagination, it will usually be found that there is something moral in the cause which gives birth to this expansion" (Political Justice 145-146). Thus, the enthusiasm that Euthanasia feels for the poetry of the Roman poets is related to morality or some deep-seated truth since it leads her to perform acts of charity and self-sacrifice towards the ones who are suffering or are dependent on her. Thus, her enthusiasm is provoked by ideals of freedom. Her wisdom derives

[252] Euthanasia's enthusiasm is inspired by the Roman poet's virtue for liberty. In her demonstration of the ravages that Castruccio's ambition to power brings to the people, Shelley is sympathetic, like Madame de Staël, to the hope for Italy's independence and unification. Indeed, in Rambles, Shelley argues that the reason why there has not been great literary works in Italy after the sixteenth-century is because Italy has been deprived of "political freedom" (329). In "Gender and Italian Nationalism in Mary Shelley's Rambles in Germany and Italy", Jeanne Moskal maintains that Shelley "advocates the cause of Italian nationalism, excusing the excesses of its advocates, the Carbonari, and promoting recent Italian literature with a nationalist agenda." (188). Indeed, Shelley promotes Italian nationalism by equating great Italian literary works with freedom. Shelley writes, "The history of Italian poetry confirms the truth, that the poet follows the real and sublimest scope of art when he keeps in mind the character of his country and of his age. The highest Italian poetry is truly national" (Rambles 329). For Shelley, lack of liberty leads writers merely to literary imitation but without any originality. Furthermore, Shelley would associate Italy's emerging national identity to the Carbonari: "The Carbonari first taught the Italians to consider themselves as forming a nation" (Rambles 281). Indded, Moskal indicates that in order to avoid having Italian nationalism linked with Napoleon in the mind of her English readers, she attributes "the credit for Italian nationalism entirely to the Carbonari" ("Gender and Italian Nationalism" 195).

from her learning of the ideals of liberty of ancient poets and philosophers. The narrator says that she has "a wisdom exalted by enthusiasm, a wildness tempered by self-command" (Valperga 142). Her wisdom is qualified by an enthusiasm and by genuine feelings to act for the benefit of others. She is also said to "love the very shadow of freedom with unbounded enthusiasm" (Valperga 142). This love for liberty explains her resistance against Castruccio's schemes of war and conquest.

Poetry is for Euthanasia a path towards greater liberty, wisdom and good. For Euthanasia, the Roman poets who embraced liberty should become an example to follow for the rest of humanity: "If time had not shaken the light of poetry and of genius from his wings, all the past would be dark and trackless: now we have a track—the glorious foot-marks of the children of liberty; let us imitate them" (Valperga 147). That poetry is to be held as a model which will shape future institutions built on liberty echoes PBS's statement that "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (Defence of Poetry Ingpen and Peck 140). In addition, the phrase "the foot-marks of the children of liberty" brings to mind the prince Castel-Forte's statement about Corinne whom he considers as a model for all that represents beauty and the fine arts in Italy and as a hope for the future:

> Nous nous plaisons à la contempler comme une admirable production de notre climat, de nos beaux-arts, comme un rejetons de passé, comme une prophétie de l'avenir ; et quand les étrangers insultent à ce pays d'où sont sorties les lumières qui ont éclairé l'Europe ; quand ils sont sans pitié pour nos torts qui naissent de nos malheurs ; nous leur disons : regardez Corinne ; oui, nous suivrions ses traces. (Corinne Balayé ed. 2000, 31)

Just as Madame de Staël's Corinne is to be held as a model for the genius that was born in Italy, the ancient roman poets to which Euthanasia refers to represent guides for the future of Italy. Thus, Euthanasia's enthusiasm is deeply ingrained in the ideals of liberty that she inherited from her father who acquainted her with the ancient Roman poets[253]: "These sentiments, nurtured and directed by my father, have caused the growth of an enthusiasm in my soul, which can only die when I die" (Valperga 147).[254] In brief, this enthusiasm that has its source in poetry has led her to uphold republican values, greater wisdom, and goodness towards others.

Apart from Euthanasia, another character in Valperga that has enthusiasm for the greater good is Guinigi. As opposed to Castruccio's need for great deeds of exploits, Guinigi is a character whose enthusiasm stems from a love of nature and peace. Guinigi's interest in farming shows a love and respect for nature and for the fruits that the earth bears that benefit mankind more than the love of war or knighthood. Guinigi, who had been himself a former soldier, says to Castruccio:

> To my eyes which do not now glance with the same fire as yours, the sight of the bounties of nature, and of the harmless peasants who cultivate the earth, is far more delightful than an army of knights hasting in brilliant array to deluge the fields with blood, and to destroy the beneficial hopes of the husbandman. (Valperga 78)

[253] The narrator describes Euthanasia's enthusiasm as "although serious and apparently quiet, was as a stream that runs deep and waveless, but whose course is swifter and stronger than that which wastes its force in foam and noise" (292).

[254] It was her father who instilled this love of liberty in her by introducing the Roman poets to her. This may be an indirect reference to Shelley's own father, Godwin who wrote Political Justice. Indeed, Rajan argues "Mary worshipped her father, whose imaginary legacy is idealized through the figure of Adimari in Valperga" (7). However, Rajan points out how Shelley's relationship with her father became more difficult when he married Mary Jane Clairmont and when at the same time he dropped his radicalism because of fierce opposition from critics of the nineteenth century (7).

Thus, rather than violence and the destruction that it brings, there is the emphasis of the richness of what the Italian nature has to offer. Guinigi's "world" is described as having a "simple yet sublime morality" (Valperga 78). In other words, there is no need for great exploits since the simplicity of the peasant has sublimity in it. The narrator says, "Guinigi thought only of the duty of man to man, laying aside the distinctions of society". This resembles Wordsworth's statement that the poet is "a man speaking to men" ("Preface to Lyrical Ballads" 877). In other words, there is dignity in the labourer and loftiness, which shows a Wordsworthian line of thinking in Guinigi's enthusiasm. Moreover, the narrator says that "Guinigi was a strange enthusiast" (Valperga 79). The fact that Guinigi is described as an "enthusiast" means that he is driven by a philosophy of peace and equality among mankind: "Guinigi hoped, how furtively! To lay a foundation-stone for the temple of peace among the Euganian hills" (Valperga 79). Guinigi's philosophy stands in contrast to Catruccio's militaristic view of nature. When returning to Valperga, the natural landscape initially awakes in Castrucco, past emotions and memories that he had shared with Euthanasia when they were children. However, these emotions are soon replaced by his plotting how he can use nature for military advantage: "The path was steep, serpentine and narrow; so that Castruccio, who now looked on nature with a soldier's eye, remarked what an excellence defence Valperga might make, if that were only access to it" (Valperga 140). Castruccio's plans resemble Napoleon's militaristic plots. Maunu explains: "His changed perception marks his changed character; instead of appreciating the natural landscape for its intrinsic beauty, he only looks to how he could use it in his military plans" (note 6; 465-466). Thus, Castruccio distances himself from Guinigi's respect for nature and philosophy of peace; instead, he causes misery on others with

his military conquests. Through Guinigi's enthusiasm for peace, Shelley juxtaposes the nurture of nature against the ravages caused by the war.

Adrian's Enthusiasm

In The Last Man, Adrian is a Corinne-inspired character not only because like Corinne he becomes broken-hearted at the loss of his romantic interest but also because his improvisatory-like speech, at the beginning of the narrative, prophesies the mission that he will undertake as humanity comes to its end. After realizing that Evadne does not reciprocate his love, Adrian becomes like Corinne physically and mentally ill. With Lionel's and Idris's care, however, Lionel recovers in part from his illness. In a scene where he is with Lionel right after his convalescence, he utters a long enthusiastic speech in view of the beauty of a natural landscape that has parallels with Corinne's last improvisation: "Adrian who felt all the fresh spirit infused by returning health, clasped his hands in delight, and exclaimed with transport" (The Last Man 58). He starts by addressing earth and its beauties and gives thanks for being alive despite having greatly suffered with grief. Towards the end of his long speech, he says: "Sleeping thus under the beneficent eye of heaven, can evil visit thee, O Earth, or grief cradle to their graves thy luckless children?" (The Last Man 60). This also resembles Corinne's second improvisation: « Ô terre, toute baignée de sang et de larmes, tu n'as jamais cessé de produire et des fruits et des fleurs ! es-tu donc sans pitié pour l'homme ? et sa poussière retourne-t-elle dans ton sein maternel sans le faire tressaillir ? » (Corinne Balayé ed. 2000, 337). In other words, both speakers, Corinne and Adrian, here question earth's relation with human suffering.[255] Adrian's final thoughts at the closing of his speech are very similar to the

[255] In Corinne's improvisation nature seems indifferent to man's pain whereas in Adrian's declamation earth has no control over human pain.

theme and tone of Corinne's second improvisation.[256] At the end of his speech, Lionel says that Adrian's "voice trembled, his eyes were cast up, his hands clasped, and his fragile person was bent, as it were with excess of emotion. The spirit of life seemed to linger in his form, as a dying flame on an altar flickers on the embers of an accepted sacrifice" (The Last Man 60). Similarly, the narrator at the end of Corinne's second improvisation says, "A ces mots une pâleur mortelle couvrit le visage de Corinne ; ses yeux se fermèrent, et elle serait tombée à terre, si lord Nelvil ne s'était pas à l'instant trouvé près d'elle pour la soutenir" (Corinne Balayé ed. 2000, 339). The role of prophecy is important to both characters in these scenes. Corinne prophesies her own eclipse when Oswald will abandon her, while Adrian in this speech prophesies the extinction of man on earth and the mission that he will undertake to help his fellow human beings in this calamity. The sacrifice refers to the gift he will make of himself almost in a Christ-like manner and resembles the Christ-like figure of Corinne who metaphorically exchanges her crown of glory for a crown of thorns during her fall.

In his drive to help the people during the plague, Adrian is inhabited by an enthusiasm that inspires him and strengthens him during his mission. In fact, Lionel is surprised to see how Adrian's health improved under the influence of his enthusiasm to lead the people during the chaos that the threat of the plague occasions (The Last Man 197). He says, "the solemn joy of enthusiasm and self-devotion illuminated his countenance; and the weakness of his physical nature seemed to pass from him, as the cloud of humanity did, in the ancient fable, from the divine lover of Semele" (The Last Man 194). Adrian's enthusiasm resembles Euthanasia's because she too helps the victims who suffer under Castruccio's rule and feels no weariness in

[256] However, the speech also echoes PBS's Defense of Poetry. For instance, Adrian addresses the imagination: "imagination! It takes from reality its leaden hue: it envelopes all thought and sensation in a radiant veil" (59). Anne McWhir notes that this passage is similar to PBS's "Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world" (Qtd. in McWhir; 59, note 62).

her task but is led by an enthusiasm that makes her look angel like. Like Euthanasia, Adrian is able to bring comfort to the people who are suffering from the plague: "Order, comfort, and even health, rose under his influence, as from the touch of a magician's wand" (The Last Man 197). Similarly to Euthanasia who tends to the sick brought about by Castruccio's wars, Adrian visits the hospitals on a daily basis and looks after the poor of London (The Last Man 198). They both seem to become immune from infection under their enthusiasm despite being exposed to contagion. Furthermore, speaking of the fact that he took up the Protectorship when the plague appeared, Adrian says: "I have felt as if a superior and indefatigable spirit had taken up its abode within me or rather incorporated itself within my weaker being. The holy visitant has for some time slept, perhaps to show me how powerless I am without its inspiration" (The Last Man 310). The "holy visitant" in him has clearly many parallels with Madame de Staël's definition of enthusiasm[257] as being 'God in us', which she draws from Plato's theory of inspiration. He prays not to lose his enthusiasm because he will become despondent without it. Just like Corinne's destiny was her own fall, his destiny is to guide the extinguishing race of men: "I have believed it to be my destiny to guide and rule the last of the race of man, till death extinguish my government; and to this destiny I submit" (The Last Man 310). After praying not to lose his enthusiasm, "his eyes gleamed in the gloom of night like two earthly stars; and his form dilating, his countenance beaming, truly it almost seemed as if at his eloquent appeal a more than mortal spirit entered his frame, exalting him above humanity" (The Last Man 311). Again, his inspiration is very Platonic and recalls PBS's explanation that "inspiration is as it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own" (Defence of Poetry Olson 31). He is inhabited by an enthusiasm which acts through him

[257] Stated in De l'Allemagne p.301.

and is apparent in a physical transformation that resembles Christ's transfiguration[258]—it is as if he undergoes an embodied enthusiasm. In fact, the frame narrator, in the introductory chapter of the novel, compares the task of reconstructing the sibylline leaves to putting together pieces of "the mosaic copy of Raphael's Transfiguration in St. Peter's" (The Last Man 4). Reassembling the sibylline leaves leads to an uncovering of a transfiguration—Adrian's embodied enthusiasm, which is central to the novel. As Shelley explains in one of her letters,[259] the character of Adrian has been modeled on PBS. Since the novel has been the first to be written after his death, it is as if Shelley through Adrian's enthusiasm wants to reconstruct PBS's transfiguration after his death into another state of being.

Like Euthanasia, Adrian's enthusiasm is grounded on a principle of Godwinian philosophy. Adrian fights for humanity when it is shaken by the plague. This type of virtue is upheld by Godwin: "virtue consists in a desire of the happiness of the species" (Political Justice 148). He does not fight for his personal glory but for the well-being of his fellow human beings. This is an indication that Adrian, similarly to Euthanasia, is moved by the greater good. In fact, at the beginning of the novel, Adrian wanted to reform the "English government". He wished "to diminish the power of the aristocracy, to effect a greater equalization of wealth and privilege, and to introduce a perfect system of republican government into England" (The Last Man 34). The class system to which he aspires is linked to ideals found in Political Justice and to the French Revolution. Adrian shows disinterestedness when he protects and guides his people during the plague just as Euthanasia does when she nurses the wounded and the ill during Castruccio's reign. Godwin says:

[258] Luke 9: 28-36.
[259] See her letter dated 25th of February 1826, p. 512 in LMWS. Vol. I. Bennett's edition

> after having habituated ourselves to promote the happiness of our child, our family, our country or our species, we are at length brought to approve and desire their happiness without retrospect to ourselves. It happens in this instance, as in the former, that we are occasionally actuated by the most perfect disinterestedness, and willingly submit to tortures and death rather than see injury committed upon the object of our affections. (Political Justice 181)

Thus, in the same manner as Euthanasia, Adrian's virtuousness is linked to his disinterestedness. Godwin defines disinterestedness as a commitment towards the greater good without any investment in "(self-)interest", "ambition", "the love of honour", or "the love of fame" (184). Adrian, as opposed to Castruccio or the false-prophet, is driven by disinterested feelings; his aim is not to promote himself but to care for the welfare of his fellow-beings. Indeed, he embraces republican values and rejects his kingship for the good of the people, and it is only when he feels that he has to take action to protect his people from the societal disruption that results from the plague that he assumes authority by taking on the Protectorship. Adrian's republican ideals link his enthusiasm to the French Revolution. Lokke explains how Immanuel Kant associated disinterestedness with the French Revolution. Lokke writes that Kant "posits the existence of a universal, disinterested sympathy for the French Revolution that, he claims, is proof of the moral disposition of the human race…Enthusiasm for the Revolution or 'passionate participation in the good' has a purely moral source that is never to be confused with self-interest and material reward " ("Children of Liberty" 506). Indeed, in "An Old Question Raised Again: In the Human Race Constantly Progressing?", Kant defines enthusiasm as a "passionate participation in the good" and as being disinterested (155). Lokke quotes the following passage from Kant: "genuine enthusiasm always moves

only toward what is ideal and, indeed, to what is purely moral, such as the concept of right, and it cannot be grafted onto self-interest." ("An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?" 155; and Qtd. in Lokke's "Children of Liberty" 506). Such a definition of enthusiasm characterizes Adrian's disinterested participation in the common good during the devastation caused by the plague. In a similar manner, Madame de Staël argues, "Tout ce qui nous porte à sacrifier notre propre bien-être ou notre propre vie est presque toujours de l'enthousiasme : car le droit chemin de la raison égoïste doit être de se prendre soi-même pour but de tous ses efforts, et de n'estimer dans ce monde que la santé, l'argent et le pouvoir" (De l'Allemagne 301). Madame de Staël links self-sacrifice rather than a desire for power to enthusiasm. Clark explains that Madame de Staël describes enthusiasm, "in terms that graft it into the debate against notions of self-interest as the main determinant of human action" (The Theory of Inspiration 149). As Clark maintains, enthusiasm, for Madame de Staël, is dissociated from self-serving purposes. Thus, for Madame de Staël, caring for the welfare of others with a sentiment of disinterestedness derives from enthusiasm. Similarly in Shelley, Adrian's actions towards his people are shaped by an enthusiasm that is grounded on disinterestedness.

Although Shelley imagines a society where class difference is eliminated due to the equalizing effects of the plague, Adrian, who has reached a greater evolutionary state, is needed to lead the people who are left in confusion. Social class becomes superfluous since the plague could attack anyone regardless of social background; as a result, everyone becomes equal:

> Poor and rich are now equal, or rather the poor were the superior, since they entered on such tasks with alacrity and experience; while ignorance, inaptitude,

> and habits of repose rendered them fatiguing to the luxurious, galling to the proud, disgustful to all whose minds, bent on intellectual improvement, held it their dearest privilege to be exempt from attending to mere animal wants. (The Last Man 241)

Thus, Shelley re-imagines a new society where social difference no longer exists. This relates to Godwin's discussion of social equality. Godwin says:

> the equality for which we are pleading, is an equality which would succeed to a state of great intellectual improvement. So bold a revolution cannot take place in human affairs, till the general mind has been cultivated…Attempts, without this preparation, will be productive only of confusion. Their effect will be momentary, and a new and more barbarous inequality will succeed. Each man, with unaltered appetite, will watch the opportunity, to gratify his love of power or of distinction, by usurping on his inattentive neighbours. (298-299)

Godwin's statement can be understood in terms of historical progress and millenarianism. In fact, Fulford explains that even if Godwin renounces Christianity, he maintains "a secular vision of historical progress" that draws from millenarianism ("Millenarianism and the Study of Romanticism" 5). Godwin's idea of a historical progress can be seen in Adrian who has achieved this "state of great intellectual improvement" — one evidence of this is his enthusiasm that guides him to help others through the plague, but, another evidence, is the fact that he espouses equality for all. It can be thus be concluded that he has reached a state that belongs to a future era—the millenarianism[260]. Actually, Lionel venerates Adrian as if he was Christ-like: "I threw myself at my length on the ground—dare I disclose the truth to the gentle

[260] The Collins English Dictionary defines "Millenarianism" as "the belief in a future millennium following the Second Coming of Christ during which he will reign on earth in peace: based on Revelation 20: 1-5.

offspring of solitude? I did so, that I might kiss the dear and sacred earth he trod" (The Last Man 316). Anne McWhir argues that Adrian is "an idealized version of Percy Shelley" (xvii). As I have stated earlier, The Last Man is the first novel that Shelley begins writing after PBS's death. My argument, therefore, is that Shelley through her grief for the death of her husband imagines a character, Adrian, who resembles PBS. She thus gives Christ-like[261] characteristics to Adrian and imagines that he has reached a more advanced state in the evolution of humanity. Indeed, Shelley writes about PBS to John Howard Payne in a letter dated February 25, 1826: "I do not in any degree believe that his being was regulated by the same laws that govern the existence of us common mortals—nor did any one think so who ever knew him. I have endeavoured but how inadequately, to give some idea of him in my last published book—the sketch has pleased some of those who best loved him" (LMWS Vol. I. Bennett 512). In an explicatory note, Frederick L. Jones adds that "The character of Adrian was modeled after Shelley" (The Letters of Mary W. Shelley note 1, 341). Thus, her letter reveals that Shelley believed that PBS was a person out of the ordinary in comparison to the rest of humankind, which thus suggests a reading of Adrian as being in a "more advanced evolutionary state".

Shelley's association of Adrian with millenarianism is similar to the manner Alfred Tennyson in his poem In Memoriam published in 1850, would make the claim that Hallam dies so young because he was not meant to live in the world of the nineteenth century since he belonged to a more advanced state of humanity. Tennyson writes:

> Whereof the man, that with me trod

[261] In fact, Duncan Wu explains that PBS compares himself to Christ in "Adonais: An Elegy on the death of John Keats": "Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow, / Which was like Cain's or Christ's" (Romanticism: An Anthology, 1211, note 70; "Adonais" lines 305-306).

This planet, was a noble type

Appearing ere the times were ripe,

That friend of mine who lives in God (Epilogue; lines 137-140)

In Shelley's The Last Man, humanity faces helplessness and despair in face of the plague's ravages that puts mankind at risk for an imminent extinction. Similarly, Tennyson had difficulty after Hallam's death to resolve differences between geological evidence of the disappearance of species on earth and faith in God. Eleanor B. Mattes explains that Tennyson struggles to "reconcile God and geology—Divine Purpose and the inexorable rise and extinction of species which geologic evidence revealed" (127).[262] Thus, Shelley would be anticipating Robert Chamber's The Vestiges of Creation in which he advances the theory that humanity is in a process of evolution. Chambers writes:

> Is our race but the initial of the grand crowning type? Are there yet species superior to us in organization, purer in feeling, more powerful in device and act, and who shall take the rule over us…There may then be occasion for a nobler type of humanity, which shall complete the zoological circle on this planet, and realize some of the dreams of the purest spirits of the present race. (Qtd. in Eleanor B. Mattes 132)

[262] Mattes quotes a passage from Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology: "The inhabitants of the globe, like all the other parts of it, are subject to change. It is not only the individual that perishes, but whole species" (123). Although Lyell's work was published in three volumes between 1830 and 1833, which is after Shelley's publication of The Last Man in 1826, her novel predates the issues that will rise out of pre-Darwinian geological theories. Mattes argues that Lyell's scientific ideas point to "that a horrible mockery and self-delusion permeates the entire structure of Western civilization, in which men build churches to worship a God of love whom nature disproves, and fight for supposedly eternal values like truth and justice, which die with the species that cherishes them" (124). Similarly, in Shelley's text, the cause for which Raymond risks his life by fighting for the independence of Greece and the ideals for which Adrian strives become futile in a world where humanity becomes extinguished because of the plague.

In other words, humanity will evolve until it reaches this "crowning type"; Chamber's theory has similarities with Godwin's idea that humanity will reach a more advanced intellectual state, which in turn is linked to Madame Staël's doctrine of human perfectibility.[263] The idea that Adrian, and by implication PBS, has achieved a certain state of perfection also recalls Plato's Phaedrus where Socrates explains that before entering the body of man, the soul had initially belonged to a higher realm but has fallen and has been born into various incarnations. Socrates says:

> Now in all these incarnations he who lives righteously has a better lot for his portion, and he who lives unrighteously a worse. For a soul does not return to the place whence she came for ten thousand years, since in no lesser time can she regain her wings, save only his soul who has sought after wisdom unfeignedly, or has conjoined his passion for a loved oned with that seeking. Such a soul, if with three revolutions of a thousand years she has thrice chosen this philosophical life, regains thereby her wings, and speeds away after three thousand years; but the rest, when they have accomplished their first life, are brought to judgment. (Phaedrus 495)

For Shelley, PBS is closer to this higher state of being because of the ideals that he expresses in his poetry, and she thus constructs a character that resembles him.

Adrian, by espousing egalitarian class ideals, is a revolutionary character. Although his revolution becomes useless in a world where the plague kills humanity, it can be said that

[263] In De la littérature, Madame de Staël explains her notion of perfectibility, "Ce système a donné lieu à tant d'interprétation absurdes, que je me crois obligée d'indiquer le sens précis que je lui donne dans mon ouvrage. Premièrement en parlant de la perfectibilité de l'esprit humain, je ne prétends dire que les modernes ont une puissance d'esprit plus grande que celle des anciens, mais seulement que la masse des idées en tout genre s'augmente avec les siècles. Secondement, en parlant de la perfectibilité de l'espèce humaine, je ne fais nullement allusion aux rêveries de quelque penseurs sur un avenir sans vraisemblance, mais aux progrès successifs de la civilisation dans toutes les classes et dans tous les pays" (59, note *).

before the end of the human race, there comes a peaceful period under the guidance of Adrian, which recalls the hope of a final revolution that would reward the oppressed as the doctrine of millenarianism promises. Ernest Tuveson explains:

> The idea of the messianic kingdom has a potentially revolutionary character. The established, all powerful rulers of this world are, ordinarily, evil and tyrannical oppressors in prophecy. They are, however, doomed to be overthrown in a great, decisive revolutionary struggle…This utopia, moreover, is brought about only by violent conflict in which the decisive factor is a divinely appointed, mysterious general-king. Against him is ranged another mysterious but apparently at least partly human figure, the 'Antichrist'. (224)

A millenarianist reading suggests that Adrian's reign, like Christ's rule, during the plague comes into conflict with the false-prophet, who represents the Antichrist. In relation to this conflict it is useful to refer to Godwin's list of some "disadvantages" of democracy.[264] One of these is that "the wise will be outnumbered by the unwise; and it will be inferred, 'that the welfare of the whole, will therefore be at the mercy of ignorance and folly'. It is true that the ignorant, will generally be sufficiently willing to listen to the judicious, 'but their very ignorance will incapacitate them from discerning the merit of their guides" (202). In The Last Man, the false-prophet who draws the crowd to him for his own personal glory and not for the welfare of his fellow human beings is an example of the chaos that could result in a democratic system when not everyone has reached like Adrian this advanced intellectual state that Godwin discusses. From a millenarianist perspective, the false-prophet would be the anti-

[264] Adrian espouses a democratic government in his willingness to see every one as his equal. Shelley may be showing a microcosm of what happens to the different political institutions under the effects of the plague.

Christ who wants to usurp the place of the rightful ruler. Indeed, the sibylline leaves that the first person narrator discovers in the Sybil's cave announce the apocalyptic bent in the narrative right from the introduction of the novel. Tuveson argues that "The Sibylline Books" are one of the "many apocalyptic works interpreting and prophesying the course of events in many periods" (224). In short, doctrines of Millenarianism[265] and Godwin's egalitarian system have an impact on Shelley's construction of a revolutionary character, Adrian.

Because Shelley created Adrian in the image of PBS, she constructs a character with revolutionary inclinations since PBS himself embraced a revolutionary view of society in his poetry.[266] When Raymond attempts to persuade Adrian to enter politics, Adrian tells Lionel, "will you make a common cause with Raymond, in dragging a poor visionary from the clouds to surround him with the fire-works and blasts of earthly grandeur, instead of heavenly rays and airs?" (The Last Man 74). By the fact that Adrian calls himself a "visionary" suggests that he dreams of societal reforms but that he is not interested in entering politics to win prestige and influence over his fellow human beings; he reserves his political actions for when it is time to save others from utter chaos in the face of the pestilence that affects England. Shelley explains that PBS believed "That man could be so perfectionized as to be able to expel evil from his own nature and from the greater part of the creation, was the cardinal point of his system" ("Note on Prometheus Unbound" 277). This suggests that PBS himself believed like

[265] Millenarianism would have been a subject that many of the contemporaries of Shelley's parents would have believed to be an event about to happen since the French Revolution would have been interpreted as a sign announcing it. Fulford maintains that with the advent of the French Revolution and the turmoil that it created in the 1790s, millenarianism was no longer thought to belong to the far future; instead it was believed to be an imminent event that will be heralded by "apocalyptic destruction" ("Millenarianism and the Study of Romanticism" 2).

[266] Bryan Shelley, who explores the influence of the bible on PBS's poetry, writes that during the first period of Percy's "poetic career", "he is primarily concerned with the transformation of society, the biblical model for which is the period of Edenic restoration known as the Millennium" (ix). Thus, this shows how PBS's poetry had revolutionary inclinations.

Godwin that mankind can achieve "a state of great intellectual improvement" (Political Justice 298-299). In The Last Man, the leveling of class organization brings to mind the revolutionary message in PBS's Prometheus Unbound where there is a break with class hierarchies after the fall of Jupiter:

> thrones were kingless, and men walked
> One with the other as spirits do…
> the man remains
> Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed—but man:
> Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
> Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
> Over himself; just, gentle, wise—but man. (Act III, Scene IV lines 197-201 & 135-136)

Shelley also adopts PBS's visionary view of societal equalization in The Last Man by imagining Adrian with PBS's ideas and sensitivities. Moreover, in Prometheus Unbound, the fall of the tyrant entails a revolution; after it happens, corruption no longer reigns. The Spirit of the Earth says:

> All things had put their evil nature off.
> I cannot tell my joy, when o'er a lake,
> Upon a drooping bough with nightshade twined,
> I saw two azures halcyons clinging downward
> And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries
> With quick long beaks… (Act III; Scene IV, Lines 82-84)

After the fall of Jupiter, there are many positive outcomes. Wu writes, "In the regenerated purified world, deadly nightshade is no longer poisonous, and kingfishers turn vegetarian rather than eat fish" (Romanticism: An Anthology 1146, note 4). Similarly in The Last Man, as the plague gradually extinguishes human life, humanity is cleansed of its societal corruption and inequalities; thus, society reaches temporarily this revolutionary state in which Adrian is needed to play an important role in maintaining order because humanity is not yet intellectually ready to assume this social leveling. It is interesting to note that in Prometheus Unbound, PBS imagines a vegetarian world[267] after the revolution, which is another indication that Adrian, in the Last Man, resembles PBS who was a vegetarian. In short, Godwin's system of ethics in Political Justice and Madame de Staël's writings as well as PBS's philosophy play a role in constructing Adrian in the image of PBS, which suggests that Shelley needed Godwin's radical views, Madame de Staël's Platonic theories on enthusiasm and fictionalized version of improvisation, and PBS's poetry in order to reconstruct her husband's memory; in this, Shelley resembles her own first-person narrator at the opening of the novel who remodels the Sibylline Leaves.

Sublime Beauty

Shelley shows the inadequacy of language to express the enthusiasm associated with sublime beauty. Remembering the time when Euthanasia visited the Pantheon in Rome, she recounts to Castruccio, "It seemed as if the spirit of beauty descended on my soul, as I sat

[267] Geoffrey Matthews and Kevin Everest, the editors of "Queen Mab", maintain that PBS "became a vegetarian from about 1 March 1812 and remained one, generally speaking, for the rest of his life" (406-407). PBS argues in his notes to Queen Mab on vegetarianism (which the editors claim to be almost identical to his A Vindication of Natural Diet) that societal corruption, disease, and the fate of the poor is the result of our "unnatural habits", one of which is our consumption of meat (line 218; notes to Queen Mab). Thus, in this long poem too, society will have no corruption when it will be able to fight its inclination for meat, in a state of more advanced intellectual improvement.

there in mute extacy" (Valperga 150).[268] Explained in Platonic terms, the fact that she feels that the "spirit of beauty" inhabits her upon visiting the Pantheon is as if her experience of beauty creates in her an enthusiasm that could stand for the deity that descends upon the artist. Shelley's word choice "spirit of beauty" and "extacy" to convey Euthanasia's enthusiasm is reminiscent of PBS's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" in which the speaker refers to the "spirit of beauty" and how its "shadow fell on me—/ I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy" (lines 13 & 59-60). This link shows how Shelley was also participating in the poetics of inspiration of her time. However, unlike Corinne who exteriorizes her enthusiasm in improvisation, Euthanasia remains "mute" even though she feels "extacy". As I have presented in my earlier chapter, Nicolson argues that it was difficult for writers to find the words to convey their experience of the sublime. Nicolson points out that this difficulty in language is also considered by John Ruskin in his Pathetic Fallacy where he writes:

> However great a man may be, there are always some subjects which *ought* to throw him off his balance; some by which his poor human capacity of thought should be conquered, and brought into inaccurate and vague state of perception, so that the language of the highest inspiration becomes broken, obscure, and wild in metaphor. (Qtd. in Nicolson Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory 287).

Thus, it can be inferred that Ruskin in The Pathetic Fallacy considers that the break down of language's capability to express certain experiences is due to a certain enthusiasm. Ruskin's adequate capture of this difficulty of language to convey words in an intense state of enthusiasm is present in Shelley's description of Euthanasia's speechlessness and intense

[268] In Shelley's "The Heir of Mondolfo", she uses again the phrase the "spirit of beauty", and it, once again, reigns among ruins; in this particular instance, Viola feels in turn "gratitude" (Collected Tales 328).

emotional state towards the sublime beauty of the Pantheon.[269] Moreover, Angela Leighton's explanation of how the sublime is associated in the eighteenth century with a creativity that is accompanied with an impotence to express it in words is useful to understand Euthanasia's muteness in face of the sublime and the beautiful. Leighton argues:

> Aesthetics of the sublime, in the eighteenth century, are not strictly means of judging artistic merit at all. They are celebrations of creativity, and of a creativity which always precedes its expression in words. Whether that creativity be located in the natural landscape, which shows forth the vastness of the Deity and is therefore confused with the creation, or whether it is located in the poet's enthusiasm, that emotional urgency which hurries the heart's feelings into words, or whether it is located in the imagination, which represents objects that are vaster or stranger than life, the art of the sublime springs from sources which lie behind and before language…It celebrates a creativity which precedes and continually eludes the clutch of words and forms, and against which words and forms find the measure of their very poignant and expressive inadequacy. (Shelley and the Sublime 20-21)

Drawing from Leighton's explanation, it can be said that in view of sublime beauty, Euthanasia feels an inspiration that is inexpressible in words. Similarly, in Essay on Original Genius, Duff points out that people with genius habitually reflect on sublime beauty but are often so overwhelmed by the powerfulness of their inspiration that they are unable to articulate it:

[269] In a letter to Thomas Love Peacock written on March 23 1819, PBS, speaking of the Baths of Caracalla, says: "Come to Rome. It is a scene by which expression is overpowered: which words cannot convey" (The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley Jones 85). Thus, PBS would also be interested in an aesthetic that is inexpressible in words.

> A person who is possessed of this quality, naturally turns his thoughts to the contemplation of the Grand and Wonderful, in nature or in human life, in the visible creation, or in that of his own fancy. Revolving these awful and magnificent scenes in his musing mind, he labours to express in his compositions the ideas which dilate and swell in his Imagination; but is often unsuccessful in his efforts. In attempting to represent these, he feels himself embarrassed; words are too weak to convey the ardor of his sentiments, and he frequently sinks under the immensity of his own conceptions. (164-165)

Duff's explanation is useful for understanding how Euthanasia is mostly associated with the aesthetics of poetry, for she, like poets, feels the frustration of a lack in language to convey the feeling of awe that sublime beauty awakes in her. Furthermore, Euthanasia, when she is in a state of enthusiasm, says that she is unable to utter what she feels because at that instant she should expire: "I feel as it were my own soul at work within me, and surely, if I could disclose its secret operations, and lay bare the vitals of my being, in that moment, which would be one of overwhelming extacy—in that moment I should die" (Valperga 150). In order to appreciate what Euthanasia means when she refers to the "spirit of beauty" and as to why she is unable to utter her experience of it or that if she did at the instant she would die, it is helpful to turn to Plato's Symposium. In this dialogue, Plato writes that an individual moves through different stages of the experience of the beautiful from mere physical beauty to the beauty of the soul until he reaches the "final revelation" (Symposium 562). Plato's description of absolute beauty is as follows:

> Nor will his vision of the beautiful take the form of a face, or of hands, or of anything that is of the flesh. It will be neither words, nor knowledge, nor a

> something that exists in something else, such as a living creature, or the earth, or the heavens, or anything that is—but subsisting of itself and by itself in an eternal oneness, while every lovely thing partakes of it in such sort that, however much the parts may wax and wane, it will be neither more nor less, but still the same inviolable whole. (Symposium 562)

Thus, Euthanasia seems to have reached this "final revelation" of "eternal oneness" in her experience of the beautiful, and this is why she cannot put her vision into words.[270] She is unable to utter what she feels because language is closer to the material or the finite world, whereas the sentiments that she feels are part of a transcendental experience of beauty.

More generally in Shelley's writings, however, what often enables a character to rise from despondency is an enthusiasm that develops from having a sense of purpose. Lionel, like Adrian, is sustained by the enthusiasm that arises from having a sense purpose in the face of the pestilence that affects the survival of the human race. Lionel says, "A feeling of devotion, of duty, of a high and steady purpose, elevated me; a strange joy filled my heart. In the midst of saddest grief I seemed to tread air, while the spirit of good shed round me an ambrosial atmosphere, which blunted the sting of sympathy, and purified the air of sighs" (The Last Man 215). This is seen in Idris too who feels a "thoughtless enthusiasm" when she "devoted herself to the care of the sick and helpless" at the commencement of the pestilence (The Last Man 216). In Lodore, when Cornelia chooses self-sacrifice for the happiness of her daughter, she rises from her self-centeredness to a state of enthusiasm. The narrator says that "She (Cornelia) could not herself understand, nor did she wish to know, whence and why this

[270] In Shelley's "Fields of Fancy", Diotima similarly feels the inability to express in words what she feels in relation to the beautiful and the sublime. Diotima says, "Deep and inexplicable spirit give me words to express my adoration; my mind is hurried away but with language I cannot tell how I feel thy loveliness!" ("The Fields of Fancy" 355-356).

enthusiasm had risen like an exhalation in her soul, covering and occupying its entire space. She only knew it was there, interpenetrating, paramount" (Lodore 367). This enthusiasm that pushes her out of her depression emerges from the rediscovered love that she has for her daughter. Her enthusiasm is compared to an "exhalation", which brings to mind the word spirit. Thus, Shelley's use of the word enthusiasm, in the previous quotation, is close to its original etymological meaning given by Plato, which is to be possessed by a God. In addition, the term "exhalation" suggests a vital life force that recalls how in "Genesis" God created man by breathing life into his nostrils.[271] Shelley also describes Cornelia's enthusiasm, in the above passage, as "interpenetrating", or as if associated with the creative forces of life. Her enthusiasm gives her a sense of purpose that makes her look beyond her own self-preservation. Similarly, in Falkner, the main character's affection and sense of duty towards the orphan that he encounters deflects his attention from committing suicide. The narrator says, "Besides, he believed that to live was to suffer; to live, therefore, was in him a virtue; and the exultation, the balmy intoxication which always follows our first attempt to execute a virtuous resolve, crept over him, and elevated his spirits, though body and soul were alike weary" (Falkner 24). Acting selflessly for the good of another is presented as a virtue that lights up Falkner's enthusiasm and gives him a reason to continue living. Another character who is moved into action by enthusiasm is Edward Neville who thinks that his task is a "holier duty" than that of Hamlet's since Hamlet only wanted to avenge his father, while Neville wants to "vindicate" his mother—to "establish her innocence" (Falkner 87). His tenacity to discover the truth concerning the mystery surrounding Alithea, his mother, and to prove her innocence fires his enthusiasm. Besides Neville, there is also Elizabeth who is inspired to act selflessly for the

[271] "Genesis" 2:7.

good of her father. When Falkner gets imprisoned, Elizabeth feels it is her "sacred duty" to serve him in prison despite her entourage's objections that to do so would not be proper feminine conduct (Falkner 234). Her sacrifice for her adoptive father fills her with an "exalted enthusiasm" even though her course of action could potentially be dangerous to herself. William Brewer argues that Shelley sees many of her characters' actions as showing "disinterested benevolence" and as being "praiseworthy because they are benevolent rather than selfish or (with) self-destructive passions" (112). I agree with Brewer and would add that "disinterested benevolence" in Shelley is characterized by self-sacrifice that is enkindled by enthusiasm. Overall, what motivates Shelley's characters to cope with grief is an enthusiasm that gives them a sense of purpose. Thus, in Lives, Shelley criticizes Madame de Staël for not giving a sense a purpose to Corinne outside of herself that would have given her strength and would have saved her from death when she loses Oswald.

Nature and Enthusiasm

In Shelley's writings, there is often an enthusiasm for nature that in manifested in feelings of interconnectedness. It is apparent by the numerous references that Shelley makes to nature in her journals and in her travel writings that she has a great love for nature. In Shelley, nature enables sentiments of interconnectedness with the universe. This feeling of interconnectedness with nature is apparent with Euthanasia:

> But when tenderness softened her heart, and the sublime feeling of universal love penetrated her, she found no voice that replied so well to hers as the gentle singing of the pines under the air of noon, and the soft murmurs of the breeze that scattered her hair and freshened her cheek, and the dashing of the waters that has no beginning or end. (Valperga 144)

In this passage, the "universal love" and "the dashing of the waters that has no beginning or end" suggest pantheism and interconnectedness in nature (Valperga 144). Madame de Staël is one of the few authors who links enthusiasm with universal harmony: "L'enthousiasme se rallie à l'harmonie universelle" (De l'Allemagne 301). This connection between enthusiasm and universal harmony is also found in Shelley's texts. At many instances in Valperga, Euthanasia feels in communion with nature[272] and experiences the transcendental through the beauty found in nature.[273] After her break-up with Castruccio, while looking at the beauty of the Italian landscape, Euthanasia feels in communion with nature, which both soothes her pain and allows her to grieve: "these were sights which softened and exalted her thoughts; she felt as if she were part of a great whole" (Valperga 265).[274] This impression of interconnectedness is represented in one of the last scenes of the narrative where Euthanasia, despite being forced to exile by Castruccio, is connected and attuned to the forces of the universe:

> The eternal spirit of the universe seemed to descend upon her, and she drank breathlessly the sensation, which the silent night, the starry heavens, and the sleeping earth bestowed upon her. All seemed so peaceful that no unwelcome sensation in her own heart could disturb the scene of which she felt herself a part. (Valperga 435)

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[272] Euthanasia says, "With my eyes I have spoken to the starry skies and the green earth; and with smiles that could not express my emotion I have conversed with the soft airs of summer, the murmur of streams, and the chequered shades of our divine woods" (Valperga 145).

[273] She further says, "I have lived a solitary hermitess, and have become an enthusiast for all beauty" (Valperga 145).

[274] Like Euthanasia, Diotima, in Shelley's "Fields of Fancy", also feels part of great whole. Recounting her experience of beauty on earth, Diotima says:

> Then I have exclaimed, ["}oh world how beautiful thou art!—Oh brightest universe behold thy worshipper!—spirit of beauty & of sympathy which pervades all things, & now lifts my soul as with wings, how have you animated the light and the breezes… a feeling which while it made me alive & eager to seek the cause & animator of the scene, yet satisfied me by its very depth as if I had already found the solution to my enquir[i]es & as if in feeling my self a part of the great whole I had found the truth & secret of the universe. ("The Fields of Fancy" 355-356)

Encountering beauty and love on earth enables Diotima to feel the interconnection of all elements in the universe.

Interconnectedness in nature is an idea which Shelley shared with PBS. The phrase the "eternal spirit of the universe" recalls PBS's opening line in "Mont Blanc": "The everlasting universe of things" ("Mont Blanc" line 1). This idea of interconnectedness is also present in PBS's "On Love". PBS writes:

> Thou demandest what is love. It is that powerful attraction towards all that we conceive, or fear, or hope beyond ourselves, when we find within our own thoughts the chasm of an insufficient void, and seek to awaken in all things that are, a community with what we experience within ourselves…This is the bond and the sanction which connects not only man with man, but with everything which exists…Hence in solitude, or in that deserted state when we are surrounded by human beings and yet they sympathize not with us, we love the flowers, the grass, and the waters and the sky. In the motion of the very leaves of spring in the blue air there is then found a secret correspondence with our heart. There is eloquence in the tongueless wind and a melody in the flowing of brooks and the rustling of the reeds beside them, which by their inconceivable relation to something within the soul, awaken the spirits to dance a breathless rapture, and bring tears of mysterious tenderness to the eyes like the enthusiasm of patriotic success or the voice of one beloved singing to you alone. ("On Love" 201-202)

PBS's definition of love involves interconnectedness with the universe. His elucidation sheds light on Euthanasia's experience of interconnectedness that allows her to commune with nature and to be filled with "universal love" and "the eternal spirit of the universe". The fact

that Shelley's depiction of interconnectedness echoes PBS's understanding of love proves that she too was contributing to Romantic poetic theory.

Another evidence of the theme of the interconnectedness of nature in Shelley's writings is a desire of the human spirit to be in unison with transcendental beauty. In Rambles, Shelley explains the effect that the beauty of nature has on her, "With what serious yet quick joy do such sights fill me; and dearer still is the aspiring thought that seeks the creator in his works, as the soul yearns to throw the chains of flesh that hold it, and to dissolve and become a part of that which surrounds it" (Rambles 123). This ardent desire for interconnectedness with nature suggests that Shelley's love of nature is linked to pantheism. Moreover, Shelley's longing to interconnect with what is beautiful in nature resembles the meditation of Wordsworth's speaker in "Tintern Abbey" on how the "forms of beauty" (line 24) affect him physically and spiritually. The speaker says:

> Until the breath of this corporeal frame /
> And even the motion of our human blood /
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep /
> In body, and become a living soul, /
> While with an eye made quiet by the power /
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy, /
> We see into the life of things. ("Tintern Abbey" lines 43-50)

In an explanatory note, Wu writes, "The 'forms of beauty' induce a mystic state in which the poet is released from the confines of the body and instead engages, in a completely spiritual manner, with the life-force of the universe" (Romanticism: An Anthology 408, note 15). In light of this passage from "Tintern Abbey" and Wu's note, it is evident that Shelley, like

Wordsworth, engages with the idea that the soul wants to leave the body in moments of inspiration felt within nature. After Switzerland, Lionel and his company, in The Last Man, go to Italy, a place Shelley greatly loves for its natural scenery. Nature is so beautiful in Italy that Clara, in the novel, utters, "If you wish me to live, take me from hence. There is something in this scene of transcendent beauty, in these trees, and hills and waves, that for ever whisper to me, leave thy cumbrous flesh, and make a part of us. I earnestly entreat you to take me away" (The Last Man 340). Clara's exclamation recalls Shelley's own meditation in Rambles on how the soul yearns to unite itself with the beautiful in nature. In Clara's statement there is almost a fear that the spirit will obey the call of nature to leave the body and to mingle with the transcendental beauty that exists in nature. Clara's cry also brings to mind Plato's Phaedrus:

> Beauty it was ours to see in those days when, amidst that happy company, we beheld with our eyes that blessed vision…then were we all initiated into that mystery which is rightly accounted blessed beyond all others; whole and unblemished were we that did celebrate it, untouched by the evils that awaited us in days to come; whole and unblemished likewise, free from alloy, steadfast and blissful were the spectacles on which we gazed in the moment of final revelation; pure was the light that shone around us, and pure were we, without taint of that prison house which now we are encompassed withal, and call a body, fast bound therein as an oyster in its shell. (497)

Clara is able to behold beauty in its absolute form because she is closer to that state of purity described by Plato since she is still a child. Furthermore, Clara's reaction also recalls Wordsworth's "Ode. Intimations of Immortality", in which the speaker regrets being separated from the eternal wisdom that a child is born with but is inevitably lost with maturity:

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,

The earth, and every common sight,

To me did seem

Apparelled in celestial light,

The glory and the freshness of a dream

It is not now as it has been of yore;

Turn wheresoe'er I may

By night or day

The things which I have seen I now can see no more. (Lines 1-9)

Clara seems to have a vision in nature of that transcendental beauty which calls her to leave her body. In light of Wordsworth's "Ode", it becomes clear that Clara is so sensitive to this beauty because being still a child she is more attuned and has not yet lost this vision of the transcendental.[275] Thus, Clara's statement can be linked with the pantheism that Shelley finds in natural beauty.[276]

In this chapter, I have engaged with the different meanings of the term enthusiasm as presented in Shelley's writings. Taking into account the historical evolvement of the term starting from the seventeenth century, I have also shown that religious enthusiasm was linked to melancholia and diseased imagination. I have come to the conclusion that Shelley both

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[275] In "The Fields of Fancy", beauty is also associated with the transcendental. Diotima says:

> When I was on earth and have walked in a solitary country during the silence of night & have beheld the multitude of stars, the soft radiance of the moon reflected on the sea, which was studded by lovely islands—When I have felt the soft breeze steal across my cheek & as the words of love it has soothed & cherished / me—then my mind seemed almost to quit the body that confined it to the earth & with a quick mental sense to mingle with the scene that I hardly saw—I felt—. (355)

Thus, there is once again the longing for the soul to leave the body in order to interconnect with the beauty found in nature.

[276] See the passage cited from Rambles earlier in the paragraph.

condones and criticizes Madame de Staël's construction of Corinne. She disapproves of the fact that Madame de Staël depicts such a gifted heroine as Corinne die of unwillingness to live because of a failed romantic relationship. In her fictional writings, although Shelley does create Corinne-inspired characters with improvisational skills and enthusiastic revelations, she reveals her critical authorial position on women who completely have disempowered their strength and talents for the sake of romantic love. Shelley shows appreciation for Madame de Staël's theory on enthusiasm since it is a concept that both she and PBS had a great interest in. For this reason, I have presented how Shelley uses the different meanings of the term enthusiasm. Overall, Shelley values an enthusiasm that is regulated by reason. Her esteemed form of enthusiasm is one that she constructs on a Godwinian system of ethics and is grounded on disinterestedness. I have also argued that she has a keen interest in defining the process of inspiration and contributes to poetic theory together with the Romantic poets of her era. Shelley uses pantheism as well as doctrines of millenarianism and perfectibility to reconstruct the revolutionary beliefs and ideals of liberty of her husband after his death. There was an attempt, in this chapter, to trace moments of depicted inspiration in Shelley's writings in order to delineate her understanding and her engagement with theories of the process of inspiration.

Conclusion

My reader might be struck by the fact that I present Shelley as drawing from the writings of both Burke and Paine who seem to have completely opposite political views from each other; yet, for a writer such as Shelley who favoured a regulated form of enthusiasm, conservative and liberal discourses both offered complementary viewpoints for civil society. Although Shelley did agree with Burke's emphasis on tradition and history, Paine offers additional solutions to build a just society based on equality. Thus, both Burke and Paine proposed converging arguments that would have appealed to Shelley's notion of a tempered enthusiasm.

In the writing of this dissertation, I have come to the conclusion that revisiting Plato is worthwhile. Although previous scholars, notably Notopoulos, has analyzed the influence of Plato on PBS poetics, a lot less has been said about Plato's effect on Shelley's writings. Yet, Plato's theory of inspiration is significant in understanding Shelley's own aesthetics of inspiration.

It is important to note, however, that by the seventeenth-century, Plato's definition of enthusiasm had lost its positive connotations. In fact, from the seventeenth-century to the early nineteenth-century, one of the best manners to discredit someone's text was to accuse it of enthusiasm. As a consequence, political writers, such as Godwin, were on their guard about the possibility that their work would be misinterpreted as propagating enthusiasm. Mee has argued that enthusiasm needs to be re-included as a valid term of analysis in Romantic studies; yet, the question is why it has taken so long to be re-included. Could it be that there are still some anxieties even today about the term's historical association with extreme religious and political views? The answer is not clear, but my own research on the subject has led me to

conclude that it is fruitful to study enthusiasm in Shelley because the various senses of the term offer additional layers to understand moments of depicted inspiration in Shelley's writings.

In Corinne ou l'Italie, the representation of Italian culture, art, and poetic improvisation suggest a resistance against Napoleon's imperialism. Furthermore, Madame de Staël portrays the difficulty for a woman artist to reconcile an artistic career and the fame that it occasions with the domestic ideology in early nineteenth-century society. This conflict led the woman artist feeling disconnected and inadequate within the traditional feminine role. Corinne's psychosomatic illness, despondency, and slow suicide are signs of an interiorized anger and a form of rebellion against patriarchal constraints. Madame de Staël represents the victimization of the woman artist in order to stir the reader's sympathy and to create social change concerning gender expectations.

Moreover, my research has confirmed my initial thesis that Shelley participates together with the Romantic poets in aesthetic theory. Indeed, her observations on the art of improvisation during her travels in Italy as well as her fascination with Sgricci and Paganini reveal how invested she is in the process of inspiration. Her comments on improvised poetry suggest that for Shelley improvisation exists on a continuum from its rustic form among the common people in Italy to the highly cultivated professional improvisatore such as Sgricci. Her engagement with Madame de Staël's definition of enthusiasm in De l'Allemagne uncovers her own interest in the process of inspiration. I have come to the conclusion that she is a collaborator together with PBS in delineating the creative process since she too engages with Plato's theory of inspiration in her writings.

In her writings, Shelley considers the various historical meanings of the term enthusiasm that have occurred since the seventeenth-century. One of the meanings of enthusiasm that the author tackles with is how religious enthusiasm was interpreted by medical discourses in the seventeenth-century to be linked with melancholia and diseased imagination. In addition, her depiction of enthusiasm shows that there is an overlap between religious and poetic enthusiasm; in other words, poetic enthusiasm borrows the language of religious enthusiasm but at the same time seeks to dissociate itself from it. Also, the depiction of the devastating consequences of a lack of temperance in enthusiasm in the character of Beatrice in Valperga reveals that she favors a form of enthusiasm that is regulated by reason. True enthusiasm for Shelley is marked by disinterestedness. Drawing from the English Civil War, she, thus, depicts how pretentions to divine revelation often hide a desire for power. Through the example of the seventeenth-century English sectarians and the French Revolution, she also engages with the phenomenon of crowd enthusiasm and with the potential that it has to stir chaos and disorder in civil society.

Shelley's aesthetics of inspiration are also linked to cosmology in The Last Man. Aspects such as the sublime, Necessity, prophecy, and Time can be understood by taking into account Shelley's cosmology. I have drawn from discourses that associate the Alps with the primordial forces of creation. This led me to assert that the enthusiasm that the characters experience in view of the sublimity of the Alps has a soothing impact on their wearied spirits. Furthermore, the performance of Haydn's Creation near Mont Blanc suggests an echo of the music of the spheres. However, this notion of universal harmony coexists with Necessity. The existential questions that are presented in Lionel's narrative are a result of the role of Necessity. Basing my views on PBS's determinism in Queen Mab and on Plato's Timaeus, I

have presented several possible explanations of how Necessity operates in the narrative. Because Lionel's narrative is only a reconstruction of the sibylline leaves by the frame narrator, the prophecy has the potential to be reinterpreted differently in another context and time or by another interpreter. This adds the dimension of freedom in the temporal order within which Necessity operates. The existential anxieties that are present in the characters are accompanied by a loss of an ordered understanding of the universe. Apocalyptic prophecy is a genre that predicts the end of the world accompanied by natural disasters. Because Lionel witnesses the end of the world but without the expected natural catastrophes, it adds to his loss of an ordered understanding of the universe. He compensates for this loss by summoning nature to respond while his narrative is read by his future readers. Lastly, I have also differentiated between relative and absolute time as well as between historical and cyclical time in Shelley's cosmology in order to show that both the eternal and the transient coexist in The Last Man.

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